Mapping the Altai
in the Russian Geographical Imagination, 1650s-1900s

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ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Diese Dissertation befasst sich mit räumlichen Wahrnehmungen und Diskursen, mit denen man den Raum und seine Bestandteile behandelte. Die Eroberung Sibiriens im 17. Jahrhundert bewirkte einen tiefgreifenden Wandel in den russischen Vorstellungen über die weit entfernte Peripherie sowie deren Ressourcen. Die neuen Denkweisen kristallisierten sich in einer diskursiven Formation heraus, die Macht über Raum und Rohstoffe Sibiriens symbolisierte und organisierte. Dieser „Berg-Diskurs“ trug moderne Züge, denn er bedurfte sich neuer Formen der Kontrolle über die Raumsproduktion. Diese Einstellung wurde allmählich zu einer erstaunlich überlebensfähigen räumlichen Ideologie und zum festen Bestandteil des russischen Bodenschätzediskurses der Zukunft. Die Rolle der Wissensproduzenten wechselte zwischen den zentralen und regionalen Institutionen und Netzwerken. Der „Altai“, der den kaiserlichen Bergbau-Bezirk und die Gebirgslandschaft umfasste, wurde auf Grund seines Rohstoffreichtums von Repräsentanten des russischen Staates als Region erfunden. Die Dissertation stellt die imaginären und realen Geographien des Altai in drei unterschiedlichen Dimensionen dar. Dabei geht es um den Wandel der Repräsentationen von geographischen Räumen und der Berglandschaften in Russland insgesamt (Makroebene), die Mehrschichtigkeit des russischen Diskurses über Bergregionen und Gebirgslandschaften (Mesoebene) und den Altai als facettenreiches Konzept einer komplexen imperialen geographischen Imagination (Mikroebene). Die Beschreibung des Altai faßte in sich zahlreiche inkohärente Bilder verschiedener sozialer Gruppen. Der Ort wurde durch mentale Geographien erfolgreich instrumentalisiert, z.B. „die Goldenen Gebirge“ und „die sibirische Schweiz“. Diese Bilder machten die Region sichtbar, sowohl für nationalistisch gesinnte Gruppen als auch die breiteren Bervölkerungsschichten.

Schlagwörter: Der Altai, Imagination, der Berg-Diskurs, das Russische Imperium

ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the production of imperial space with a particular emphasis on the role of power discourses concerning mineral resources. By relying on published materials, it aims to establish a new conceptual framework for the examining of cultural patterns and practices of imagining of space and mineral wealth. For that purpose, it introduces a concept of the ”Berg-Discourse” that expands our understanding of the Russian engagement with geographical space. It begins by exploring Russian exposure to the mountains and mineral resources of Siberia in terms of the spatial knowledge production. It then examines how Russian imperial strategies and aspirations were embedded in the making of the Altai, a vast mining territory in West Siberia that once formed a private domain of the Russian rulers. The dissertation argues that the making of the Altai was in many ways part of the same imperial impulse towards mineral exploitation. It explores the ways in which the Altai was imagined through its enormous mineral endowment; how the imagined place became real; and how this real place became imagined from various vantage points. As the study shows, the region acquired multiple mental representations, enjoying a near mythological presence across imperial culture. Finally, the dissertation concludes by showing how this landscape was incorporated into imperial and national myths in the course of production and consumption of spatial knowledge about the remote location.

Keywords: The Altai, imagination, the Berg-Discourse, the Russian Empire

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LIST OF FIGURES

NOTES ON TERMINOLOGY

The Library of Congress system for transliteration has been used.

In the matters of the administrative nomenclature, the notion of ”Kabinet Eio / Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva (E.I.V.)” is translated as ”the Cabinet of Her / His Imperial Majesty.” ”Kantseliaria Kolyvano-Voskresenskogo gornogo nachalstva” and its later forms are referred to as ”the Kolyvano-Voskresenskoe” and ”the Altaiskoe mining agency”. The Mining-College will be referred to as the Berg-College in order to keep closer to the original sense.

In terms of the territorial and administrative demarcations, “guberniia” is translated as “province”, “uezd” and “orkug” as “district”. Exception is made for such notions as “oblast” and “namestnichestvo” that are left in the original form.

Place names are referred to according to the conventional terms of the considered period. In accordance with the geographical terminology of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, the Ural Mountains are referred to as the Rocky Belt (Kamen’ Poiasnyi), and the local mining factories as the Siberian factories.

Metrical nomenclature is presented in versta, sazhen’, desiatina, and pud.

ABBREVIATIONS

AAAG	Annals of the Association of American Geographers
AI	Akty Istoricheskie
GG	Geschichte und Gesellschaft
DAI	Dopolneniia k Aktam Istoricheskim
ESIUD	Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia i izvestiia o uchenykh delakh
GZh	Gornyi Zhurnal
GV	Geologicheskii Vestnik
IEHG	International Encyclopedia of Human Geographies
JfGO	Jahrbücher für die Geschichte Osteuropas
JHG	Journal of Historical Geography
NPL	Neue Politische Literatur
PSI	Pamiatniki Sibirskoi Istorii
PHG	Progress of Human Geography
PSZ	Polnoe Sobranie Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii
RKO	Russko-kitaiskie otnosheniia
RMO	Russko-mongol'skie otnosheniia
SV	Sibirskii Vestnik
TEV	Tomskie Eparkhial'nye Vedomosti
VG	Voprosy geografii
ZPR	Zapiski russkikh puteshestvennikov

CONTENTS

PART II The Limits of Mapping the Altai in Imperial and Popular Geographies

INTRODUCTION

Imperial Russia's long territorial expansion resulted in an exceptional variety of landscapes that merits our attention, the same way as its ethnic diversity. Muscovy advanced into the challenging areas, and it was increasingly forced to accommodate to a world full of previously unknown and different people and topographies that were fairly distinct from its home environment. Although considered an overland rather than an overseas empire, Russia confronted and incorporated landscapes as different as barren steppe, endless tundra and deserts, formidable mountain ranges and impenetrable taiga forest.

The mountains constituted the primary difference between the landscapes of Muscovy and Siberia, for they diverged dramatically from the flatlands that comprised central Russia.[1] Although the notion of 'mountain' was part of everyday life, it barely conveyed the physical sense of highlands as geographical landmarks. Indeed, it essentially prompted an empty blank for early Muscovite imagination in the same manner the tropical world did so to contemporary Europeans.[2]

"The great sovereign's hand" forcefully turned the natives into subjects, and charged them with a heavy fur tax, *iasak*. How did Russians treat the new landscape acquisition, a kind they had never previously experienced? The same hand turned Siberia into a source of profit. Access to resources promised power and wealth to the elites, whereas minerals and metals would provide a convincing testimony to the might and prestige of the Romanovs' crown. But, unlike the extraction of fur tribute, the longing for power over resources challenged Muscovites by changing their relationships to space. As soon as the colonizers identified mountains as sources of minerals, they had to invent a range of material and symbolical practices. This study argues that modernity made its entrance to the tsardom through the different attitudes to space and the new styles of the knowledge making. Russians had to construct modern styles of the knowledge production in a variety of ways, through immediate experience and work of imagination and memory. The arrival of modernity signified the radical

[1] Frank, "Sibirien: Peripherie und Anderes der russischen Kultur", 357-81; Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier. The Making of the Colonial Empire, 1500-1800*; Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field. Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*.

[2] See a classical study: Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in travel writing,* More recent work on colonial spaces: Driver, Martins*, eds., Tropical Visions in an Age of Empire*.

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reconfiguration of space in the Russian geographical imaginations.[3]

By situating the mountains in the multifaceted framework of the imperial past, this study interprets Russians' broader engagement with geographical space and mineral wealth as a modern attempt to wield spatial power.[4] It argues that the making of resource knowledge became a vehicle for the expression of spatial control, whilst the advanced ways of the resource mobilization facilitated Muscovy's emergence as a modern empire. This perspective captures the place of mountains and minerals in the geographical imagination in terms of colonial discourses.[5] An in-depth analysis of the ways of the knowledge production can be very helpful for us to better understand imperial geographies and discourses, as it highlights a range of moments, sites, and practices in the making of Russian mineral modernity.

In addition to placing a particular landscape in a knowledge production matrix, our approach seeks to bring the issue of natural resources back into the framework of the territorial expansion, as the Russian elites widely built their imperial vision on the mineral wealth. Although it merits a detailed scholarly analysis, this approach has been largely absent from recent works on spatial history. By raising questions about the historical making of geographical knowledge, the study attempts to provide a conceptual framework for our understanding of diverse processes of production of modern space in a more differentiated way.[6]

The study argues that, unlike with other topographies, Russians were in a constant process of mapping and remapping the mountains as physical and imaginary spaces in the course of the expansion, and they transformed this landscape into complex terrains of high density.[7] Mountain ranges played an important role of the imaginary blocks in the making of a powerful empire. This landscape gained an increasingly prominent place, and, gradually, acquired an iconic status in the Russian mind.

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[3] Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity;* Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity*; Graham, Nash, *Modern Historical Geographies*.

[4] See the studies on space and empire: Godlewska, Smith, *Geography and Empire*; Burbank, von Hagen, Remnev, *Russian Empire: space, people, power, 1700-1930*; Breyfogle, Schrader, Sunderland, *Peopling the Russian Periphery. Borderland colonization in Eurasian history*.

[5] Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses;* Said, *Orientalism;* Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*; Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference;* Nash, "Cultural Geography: postcolonial cultural geographies".

[6] Friedland, Boden, "NowHere. An Introduction to Space, Time and Modernity", 1-60; also, Lewis, Wigen, *The myth of the continent: a critique of metageography.*

[7] Mountains in human geography: Cosgrove, Dora della, eds., *High Places. Cultural Geographies of Mountains*; Tuan, *Topophilia*, 70-74; Short, *Imagined country. Environment, Culture and Society*.

The Altai provides a particularly telling place, where space, power relations and discourse came together in a distinct way. It is fully representative for examining many empire-building projects, as various geographies contributed to the constructing of this region on the ground and in the imagination.[8] Our goal is to explore in detail the historical and spatial emergence of the Altai; in other words, to reconstruct the making of geographical and discursive knowledge about this place. Specifically, it treats its creation and shaping through the Russian experience rather than those of the colonized natives. Various social groups transformed and contested the place with their material and symbolical practices. Its landscapes were landscapes of the mind, shaped and reshaped more by imagination than by immediate encounter.[9]

The study has been encouraged by a growing body of works that seek to explore complicated interactions between power processes and geographical space of imperial and Soviet Russia.[10] Recently, Nick Baron has labeled this field as *new spatial histories*.[11] Its research focus singles out space as a form of political and cultural discourse. The fast-advancing field opens up an agenda on exploring the full diversity of spatial transformations and imperial imaginations. It inspires new questions about old subjects by examining ideological constructions of space, interactions between material practices and cultural representations, etc.

In a recent review essay, Baron pointed out that, as a direction of the inquiry, *new spatial histories* pose a research lens that diverges from 'traditional' historical geography.[12] If a notion of 'new' suggests breaking from 'old', what is so radically novel about this direction? What are the traditions to depart from? Probably, none. On one hand, it repeats a broader trend in social sciences that has been tagged as "an entire influential industry of spatial studies".[13] On the other, this direction attempts to fill out a half-empty niche in historical geography of imperial Russia.[14]

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[8] "Empires are built at the frontier, not just from the center". Kivelson, *Cartographies of Tsardom,* 137.
[9] The role of imagination in: Schama, *Landscape and Memory*; Tuan, *Topophilia*.
[10] The pioneer work of Mark Bassin, *Visions of empire: nationalist imagination*; Smith, ed., *Beyond the Limits: The Concept of Space in Russian History and Culture;* Baron, "New Spatial Histories of 20th-Century Russia", 433-447; Bassin, Ely, Stockdale, eds., *Space. Place and Power;* Dobrenko, Naumann eds., *Landscapes of Stalinism. The Art and ideology of Soviet Space*; Widdis, *Visions of a New Land*.
[11] Baron, *"*New Spatial Histories of Twentieth Century Russia and the Soviet Union", 375-400.
[12] Baron, *Vlast' i prostranstvo*, 19.
[13] Casey, "Introduction to the second edition", XXI; Osterhammel, "Die Wiederkehr des Raums: Geopolitik, Geohistorie und historische Geographie", 374-97.
[14] One of the very few works: Parker, *An Historical Geography of Russia*.

The architects of *new spatial histories* emphasize that the genuine novelty lies in the particular manner in which it understands space and geography and the use it makes of them in historical analysis.[15] Regrettably, no exact methodological details are provided. The same regards the difference between the new field and the 'traditional' historical geography. A reference to "a more nuanced perspective that seeks to problematize the relationship between society and space" does not provide convincing methodological arguments either.[16] It seems that the founding fathers of *new spatial histories* dismiss historical geography for no obvious reasons. Such a decisive approach is a standard way in legitimizing an emerging research field. However, it proves too unproductive for current methodological debates. As N. Baron has recognized, *new spatial histories* are characterized neither by any unifying conceptual framework nor by methodological apparatus.[17] How, then, can complicated spatial processes of imperial Russia be captured and explored?

A brief overview of 'traditional' historical geography might be in order. Over the last two decades, this academic division has been greatly informed by many social theories and thoughts.[18] Researchers consider it a dynamic discursive formation, whilst others expand it to "a set of the discursive practices".[19] Furthermore, historical geography has served as a point of departure for at least two branches. *New cultural geography* is now a well-established research area.[20] However, *new geographical history* and its attempted break from the traditional branch reminds of the certain patterns of *new spatial histories*. It suggests that the examining of a past event cannot be reduced to a narrow geographical aspect, but it can enrich and shed new light by adding a measure of particular geographical sensitivity.[21]

The above remark strikingly reminds of "räumlich geschärften Wahrnehmung" suggested by Karl Schlögel.[22] Obviously, the spatially informed academic branches move toward their common research object from different angles, albeit with similar

[15] Bassin, Ely, Stockdale, eds., *"*Russian Space. Introduction"*,* 6.
[16] Ibid., 7.
[17] Baron, "New Spatial Histories of 20th-Century Russia", 433. See in particular the methodological incoherency of Bassin, Ely, Stockdale, eds., *Space. Place and Power.*
[18] Harris, "Power, Modernity, and Historical Geography", 671-83; Friedland, Boden, eds., *NowHere. Space, Time and Modernity;* Crampton, Elden, eds., *Space, Knowledge and Power. Foucault and Geography*.
[19] Baker, *Geography and History*, 3; Livingstone, Withers, *Geography and Enlightenment*, 3.
[20] Crang, *Cultural Geography*; Andersen, *Understanding Cultural Geography,* Pred, *Making Histories and Constructing Human Geographies*.
[21] Philo, "History, Geography and the "Still Greater Mystery" of Historical Geography", 252-81.
[22] Schlögel, „Die Wiederkehr des Raums", 11.

goals in mind. This conceptual trend confirms the observation that: "Geography and history are different ways of looking at the world but they are so closely related that neither one can afford to ignore or even neglect the other".[23]

New spatial histories advance our understanding of imperial Russia's complex spatial relationships, but there remains a conceptual need to get back to the basics. For this reason, historical geography and new cultural geography are the first place to turn for the methodology and insights.[24] In terms of thinking geographically in explanation of the historical context, this study combines descriptive and interpretative analyses. It seeks for a more engaged dialogue between history and geography, as imperial space comes under scrutiny through a cross-disciplinary approach.[25]

The inquiry seeks to frame the making and imagining of the Altai in a larger imperial context that considers more broadly the importance of spatial modernity. It reveals a set of imperial practices of colonization and rule at work, and explores the production of modern knowledge. Although the mapping can be presented as a straight process that transformed an undifferentiated space into an economic region, the study seeks for a more sensitive reading. Three discrete modes are discerned: the first positioned the Altai as a mountain range on the maps; a second repositioned it as a mining district; a third constructed a dense place through a range of images.

What makes this place interesting? Shifting power geographies turned a practically unknown frontier location into a prominent region with a double status in the empire's territorial taxonomy. At one level, it was part of the country; at the other, it belonged to the monarch's private domain; its territory and natural resources were economically divorced from the rest of the empire. It is not our task here to recount its mineral output, which was extracted and consumed long ago. A substantial corpus of scholarship has been devoted to it. Rather, our interest lies in how the region registered and reflected dynamics of imperial Russia's spatial order. Despite the peripheral location, it proved unusually sensitive to shifts in power relations.

The geographical extent of the territory is a broad range of present day West Siberian regions: parts of Tomskaia, Novosibirskaia and Kemerovskaia oblasts; Altaiskii and Krasnoiarskii krai; the Republics of Altai and Khakassia; and the east of Semipalatinskaia oblast' in Kazakhstan. They comprise a huge territory, which was

[23] Baker, *Geography and History. Bridging the Divide*, 3.
[24] Hubbard et al, *Thinking Geographically*; Castreen, *IEHG, I-XI,* etc.
[25] Ogborn, "The relation between geography and history", 99.

once defined as the Altai mining district (*Altaiskii gornyi okrug*). Topographically, it varies from plains to highlands rising to above 4,500 m.

Stephen Kotkin has pointed out that Russian regional history should not be explored from the present-day perspective, as it makes more sense to focus on the history of the traditional territories, i.e. of the Tomskaia province.[26] However, the specific making of the Altai district challenges our understanding of the hierarchical organization of imperial space. Power geographies imbued it with a more 'real' life than any other territory across Siberia; its regional weight fairly surpassed the Tomskaia province, whose southern parts it took.

Apart from the precious metals, the Altai (Kolyvano-Voskresenskie) district and factories fostered abundant textual records and studies. The region has been "bread" for several generations of researchers. Since the late eighteenth century onward, commentators and observers focused on how the central government procured and managed the site; the output of the factories was meticulously counted.[27] In the Soviet period, it became one of the most exhaustively studied topics in Siberian scholarship and was considered "a state in a state" and "a militarized district".[28] According to the spirit of the time, historians gave top priority to examining the social dimensions. Ascribed peasants and miners' working conditions as well as children's labor received critical scrutiny.[29] The post-Soviet scholarship trod these paths well.[30]

The wealth of historical studies advanced with an influential and deeply rooted meta-narrative. The courageous developer Akinfii Demidov became aware of plentiful copper mines in the Altai, which presumably meant "golden mountains" in native tongues. In his Kolyvanskie factories, he secretly mined silver. Big secrets are hard to keep, and the owner was forced to uncover his findings to the empress Elizabeth. After his sudden death, the sovereign signed a decree that claimed the factories as part of her private domain.

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[26] Kotkin, "O kraevedenii i ego metodologii*",*16-25.

[27] German, *Sochinenia o Sibirskikh rudnikakh i zavodakh*; *Istoricheskoe izvestie o Kolyvano-Voskresenskikh zavodakh,* pt. 2; Fal'k, *Zapiski puteshestviia*, 435-511; Spasskii*, Zhizneopisanie Demidova*, Rozhkov, "Akinfii Nikitich Demidov", etc.

[28] *Istoriia Sibiri*, II, 49; Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri*, 60; Anashkin, *Istoriia Altaia,* 17. A chapter in Blanchard, *Russia's Age of Silver* seems to be the only Western study on it.

[29] Bakhrushin, *Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri,* 172-74; Liubomirov, *Ocherko po istorii metallurgii,* 112-114, 174-178*;* Kafengauz, *Istoriia khoziaistva Demidovykh;* Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri*, Zheravina, *Kabinetskoe hoziaistvo v Sibiri.*

[30] Soboleva, Razgon, *Ocherki istorii kabinetskogo khoziaistva na Altae;* Perezhogin, *Voenizorovannaia sistema upravleniia Kolyvano-Voskresenskogo Altaiskogo gornogo okruga;* Zheravina, *Ocherki po istorii pripisnykh krestian kabinetskogo hoziaistva.*

Historians claim that the Altai district was established in 1747.[31] However, decree No. 9403 referred only to the Kolyvanskie factories. Neither official reports nor geographical writings from the period used the term 'district' as a regular category. The fact that this notion was absent in the records until the mid-1810s illustrates the grip of conventional imagination that clothes the eighteenth-century geographies into the later concepts. The dogma "Demidov established the plants in the Altai golden mountains" confuses our understanding by clouding the *how* part. Reduced to a simple narrative about the rise and fall of the factories, the regional meta-narrative largely obscures the discursive context in which the site was constructed and provides little insights into its spatial past. However, it is time to revise the standard account and step off the well-trodden path in order to trace the process in which the place emerged geographically.

The sources give us a broad background of the plants, but a particular dimension has not been recognized yet. Earlier research on the Altai appeared prior to the "spatial turn" in humanities, and the element, which was mostly overlooked, was space. It was typically seen as a passive backdrop of the factories; a lifeless stage on which the historical events unfolded. The district has become naturalized to such an extent that it seemed 'to be always there'. However, it is one of our arguments that it did not emerge out of blank space. Neither its regional status nor its meaning can be taken for granted.[32] The well-worn research angle is dismissed in order to scrutinize the region through a geographical lens and resituate it into a larger imperial order.

My methodology draws on the approaches of historical and cultural geographies and a range of the analytical concepts: geographical imagination,[33] space,[34] place,[35] region,[36] and imaginary geographies.[37] It has greatly benefited from recent works in

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[31] Zhidkov, *Kabinetskoe zemlevladenie*, 60-71; Borblik, "Territorial'no-administrativnoe ustroistvo Kolyvano-Voskresenskogo gornogo okruga", 25-35; Zheravina, *Kabinetskoe hoziaistvo v Sibiri,* 57-59; Soboleva, "Administrativno-territorial'noe ustroistvo", 759-69.

[32] "We take regions for granted". Murphy, "Regions as social constructs", 26.

[33] Agnew, Duncan, eds., *The Power of Place,* 1; Massey, "Imagining the World", 41; Castreen, *IEHG*, II, 160; Tuan, *Space and Place*, 80; Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*; Johnston, *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, 299-301; Harvey, "Between Space and Time", 443-465.

[34] Tuan, *Space and Place*; Hubbard et al, *Thinking Geographically. Space, Theory and Contemporary Human Geography;* Kitchin, Blades, *The Cognition of Geographic Space*; Harvey, "Space as a Keyword", 271-93.

[35] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*; Tuan, *Topophilia.* Pred, "Place as a historically contingent process", 279-97; Duncan, ed., *Place/ Culture/Representation*; Tim Cresswell, *Place, A Short Introduction*; *IEHG*, VIII, 169-177.

[36] Gilbert, "The Idea of the region", 157-175; Paasi, "The instituionalization of regions", 105-146; Murphy "Regions as social constructs", 22-35; *IEHG,* XI, 136-150.

[37] Allen, "*Lands of Myth",* 45; Driver, *"*Imaginative Geographies",209-16*;* Warf, *Encyclopedia,* 244-6.

geographies of modernity.[38] In order to build up a coherent and spatially oriented theoretical framework, two key concepts will be employed: *mineral mapping* and *the Russian Berg Discourse*.

As a means of making sense of space, mental mapping implies a diverse range of cognitive processes.[39] Our use of the term unifies several objectives. It serves as a point of departure for an analytical concept of *mineral* or *resource mapping*. First, mapping is rethought as a modern modality of the spatial knowledge production. This approach singles out the making of resource knowledge as a form of spatial power. The multisided activity implies a range of practices involved with the discovery and exploitation of resources. Second, *mineral mapping* climbs into another dimension, that is of the making of a resource region. In the course of empire building, this served as a general framework for mobilizing the peripheries, people and resources. In the recently conquered areas, this style of the region making proved more productive than the ordinary administrative regionalization. Third, *mineral mapping* has a clear symbolical dimension that captures discursive transformations of geographical space and its cultural representations.

As others have indicated, along with the tangible aspects, mineral reserves pose a bundle of natural, biophysical, productive, cultural and economic relations.[40] This reveals a dynamic interaction between minerals and cultural myths, which, in turn, shape our spatial perception. It is one of our arguments that all three levels of mineral mapping weave together the historical making of the Altai as a discursive thread.

Finally, we turn to our central concept – *the Russian Berg Discourse*. The seminal works of the French philosopher Michel Foucault and others have shown that the notions of discourse and power are deeply interwoven with each other, whereas knowledge serves as a primary means to wield spatial power.[41] Attention to the Russian

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[38] Discussions on Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* in: Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework", 660-80. Other important studies: Gregory, "Interventions in the Historical Geography of Modernity", 17-44; Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*; Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity*; Graham, Nash, *Modern Historical Geographies.*

[39] Downs, Stea, eds., *Image and Environment. Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior; IEHG*, VII, 73; Jackson, *Maps of Meaning;* Cosgrove, Introduction, *Mappings*, 1-23; idem, Martins, "Millenial Geographies", 97; idem, "Mapping / Cartography", 27-33; idem, della Dora, Introduction, *High Places. Cultural Geographies of Mountains,* 8; Edney, *Mapping an Empire. The Geographical Construction of British India.*

[40] Watts, "Natural resources," 177-9; also, Harvey, *Justice, Nature and Geography of Difference*, pt. 6.

[41] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*; *Die Ordnung des Diskurses; Archeologie des Wissens*; Said, *Orientalism;* Barnes, Duncan, eds., *Writing Worlds. Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape.*

relationship to space reveals a previously unexamined spatial discourse. The idea of the Berg Discourse is inspired by a simple proposition that Russians' exposure to colonial mountain terrains cannot be reduced to a plain cultural encounter with the other topographical scene. This fully encapsulates the contradictory essence of the knowledge production in terms of power and modernity, as it ably captures the multilayered connections between control, space, and minerals in the empire.

The Berg Discourse means a framework that shaped the representations of the imperial peripheries via a system of certain meanings. It is employed here to explore the ruling elites' power over resources in a way that was distinct from other forms of governmental control. By regulating the mineral and mining operations, power institutions kept tight control of resources as gatekeepers.[42] The entry to the discourse was denied to lower groups. Mineral and mining layers were the central issue that would thread the entire discourse into the future. Deeply informed by the further evolvement, this imperial phenomenon is interpreted through its influential impact upon power relations of the current Russian Federation.[43]

Although the concept may enhance our understanding of space and power, why invent one more boring discourse and not focus on the place alone? Why is this methodologically slippery notion employed? As others have pointed out, there have been no studies dedicated to the analysis of Russian and Soviet perception of particular landscapes.[44] In this relation, why not attempt to treat geographical landmarks and landscape types as distinct discourses through which specific meanings, representations, and practices were produced?[45] It is evident that discourses have material expression in geographies and scenes that they shape. For that reason, it is worthy to focus on nature of the spatial representations in colonial discourses. Mountains provide a compelling focus for an interdisciplinary study that will take us to a better understanding of abstract forces and relations that construct our social and material reality.[46] Evidently, among diverse landscapes of the country, mountains were the most required sites for the projects of imperial modernity.

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[42] Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*, 25.
[43] Auge, "Die Sinnkrise der Gegenwart", 44.
[44] Baron, "New Spatial Histories", 395.
[45] Gregory, *Geographical Imaginations*. A recent study: Hausmann, *Mütterchen Wolga. Ein Fluss als Erinnerungsort vom 16. bis in das frühe 20. Jahrhundert.*
[46] Baron, "New Spatial Histories of 20th-Century Russia", 436. Also: Cosgrove, Dora della, eds., *High Places. Cultural Geographies of Mountains;* Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains. Hill Stations and the British Raj.*

One more 'why' concerns this notion. The language provides several working references: *mineral, mining* and *mountain discourse*. However, the former are too operational to convey its specific cultural background; they radically empty the discourse of the complicated tensions within the Russian exposure to mountain terrains. On the contrary, to have it plainly as "mountain discourses" seems inadequate to the task, as this obscures the important role of the mining and mineral facets in the imperial projects. With all this, it might be more accurate to entitle it as *the Berg Discourse*, as it unites all above connotations. Besides, "*Berg*" points to the German considerable input to this grand area of empire building.

Although the discourse offers a deceptive variety of approaches, it cannot be easily defined. It might not be irreducible to a single definition or a set of definitions, as it had multiple and shifting meanings. It took on as many forms, as there were discourses. Its procedures and practices operated in different ways in different places, often in a highly distinctive manner. Being one of the major state pillars, the discourse impacted Russian imperial thinking and was deeply wedded to its power institutions, albeit often unstated and underrepresented. As spatial ideology, it posed a modern framework for the mobilizing of and maintaining control over colonies and resources. Deeply embedded at the heart of tsarist Russia, it became central to the processes of empire building, as the ongoing expansion constructed and saturated the discourse by adding new areas and fertile possibilities. However, it would be too banal to present the discourse as a "melting tiegel" of the elites' concerns and practices. Rather, it should be treated as a complex and dynamic multiplicity of power modalities, competing networks and institutions, changes and experiences.

What can the Berg Discourse tell us about the Altai in particular and the empire more broadly? What makes it meaningful for this study? It is one of our arguments that only with the Berg Discourse as a broad context would any explanation about the Altai make sense. The making of the region cannot be grasped outside the long history of Russians' engagement with space and resources. One of our main concerns is to cut the discourse down to the manageable dimensions and reveal it at work in empire building. The study takes the Altai as a local site for the production of modern knowledge and one of the key venues of the discourse because it illuminates the ways in which complicated power relations manifested themselves in the concrete location. It argues that, as a particular form of control, the discourse was fundamental to the constructing of the site on the ground and in the imagination. At one level, it provides an explanatory

background of who mapped the region, when they did so and how it was done. At the other, it brings the discourse into the frame without ever losing sight of the place itself. It is through the discourse that the mapping of the Altai will be captured in terms of broader shifts in larger imperial geographies.

Despite the explanations, the definitions of the Berg Discourse may remain elusive. How can it be seized and turned into an analytical concept? Obviously, if there is a discourse, then, there must be those who represent it.[47] In order to bring it down to the essentials, the study turns to those, who mapped the mountain terrains with great effort and made the specific spatial knowledge. Who constructed and shaped the discourse? Was it a loose collection of interest groups or dense networks of people with similar goals in mind?

In the mid-eighteenth century, a young poet Adrian Dubrovskii intuitively captured much of the essence of the rising discourse. The Russian Empire gained material benefits in the challenging locations that Muscovy had hardly dared venture:

"*My novye stroi vedem mezh beregov,*
My tam koryst' berom, gde gory vechnykh l'dov;
Gluboko vhodim my v ob'iatia zemnye.
Nakhodim tam sebe sokrovishcha dragie
My meriaem bez mer verkhi vysokikh gor,
My bolshe vo sto krat usugubliaem vzor..."[48]

Perhaps, the most important in this piece is the collective "we". Various groups, diverse in their origin and background, focused their attention and energy on mountains. Concerted efforts of military forces, naturalists, mining experts, poets, religious dissidents, missionaries, peasants, etc., reduced physical and mental distances to the looming highlands on the imperial edges.

Who were the producers and participants of the Berg Discourse in various empire-building areas? The study refers to the groups that incorporated power over space and resources and participated in the imperial administrating as the ruling elites. These dominant groups strictly controlled the discourse. Obviously, they needed the cooperation of the credible knowledge makers in the constructing of the discourse. For that purpose, trans-regional networks were established to serve their interests. Together, they acted as modern masters over mountain spaces and mineral wealth, whereas mountains continued to remain in the focus of the competing agendas. This landscape

[47] Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference,* 80.
[48] Dubrovskii, "Na osleplenie strastiami", 143.

posed a contested terrain for the clusters of professional networks that battled to control the knowledge production in an effort to implement it for own goals.

The study is based upon published sources. The documents used here range from the collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire (PSZ), official government reports, Siberian servicemen's accounts, statistical works, historical dictionaries, exploration and geographical writings, scholarly accounts, travel journals, school textbooks, fiction, folklore, geological literature, maps, etc. What is the methodological approach to the sources? The study attempts to avoid an approach that would simply comb them in a search for the 'mountain' references, and ask the research questions rooted in the dominating narrative, which, in the end, generates the answers.

The work is organized temporally and thematically. The major time frame is the 1650s through the 1900s. A long span starts around the mid-seventeenth century, a key moment to Muscovites' exposure to Asian highlands. It concludes in the period, when the Altai region stood for an admired pearl in the Siberian crown of the empire.

While set in a general chronological framework, the study is structured into two main parts. **Part I "The Russian Berg Discourse as a Short Path into Modernity"** looks inside the discourse in order to capture a range of moments in the making of resource-based modernity. In exploring how the discourse emerged and changed in terms of its organization, networks, and practices, it reveals a rich historical context of power relations and knowledge. Each chapter demonstrates a particular way of treating geographical space. Whilst examining diverse mapping modalities, it details the people, institutions, and localities associated with the production of resource knowledge, and briefly provides structural profiles of the discursive networks. Chapters 1 through 4 handle the knowledge production from the early modern period on. While exploring Muscovites' initial exposure to the mountains, it outlines the shifts in the representations, and pinpoints key moments in discourse's evolvement in the Russian Mineral Empire. Chapter 5 deals with a different kind of power relations. It examines how maps produced mountains and traces the mapping endeavors of the Central Asian highlands; it also reflects on the ambivalent place of mountains in the imagination. For the chronological convenience, this part includes the Altai's cartographic mapping.

Part II "The Limits of Mapping the Altai in Imperial and Popular Geographies" presents an extended case study and focuses on two continuous modes of mapping. Chapter 6 charts a series of the incoherent shifts and regionalization efforts that worked towards the rise of the Kolyvanskie silver mining factories to a grand-scale

territory in West Siberia. By changing the research lens, Chapters 7 and 8 suggest an interpretative framework for exploring the imagery made by various groups. Although they shaped the place with help of symbolical geographies, their visions originated from the ruling elites' previous mapping. The Golden Mountains and Siberian Switzerland, two visions that dominated the bulk of the regional imagery are examined. The further mapping efforts resulted in the producing of the imperial Altai that comprised the mining district and the nearby mountain range.

A few notes are in order to explain this study. It examines the mapping of a particular region, and it does not seek a cultural history of the Altai mountain system. Neither is it an exemplary history of mountain colonization. Nothing will be said about mountains as points of contact between native inhabitants and colonizers. The focus is restricted to the discursive facets of the Russian exposure to the mountains. The research does not address much of the Russian spatial experience in the Caucasus, as it has been widely highlighted in a range of studies. In exploring the origins of the Altai district, the focus is only on its spatial dimensions; no parallels will be drawn to compare it with other similar units. Regarding mineral mapping, the focus is only on the actual making sense of space.

Neither particular places nor regions emerge out of nothing, as they form an outcome of material and social practices. In the same way, the Altai was a product of complex power relations and social interactions. However, it would be erroneous to assume that they can be accurately reconstructed layer by layer, for the researchers suggest to refrain from reconstructing past geographies: "our knowledge and understanding of the past is undoubtedly constrained by our own ideas and ideologies".[49] In a sense, this work constructs a series of various mappings and re-mappings that led to the emergence of the place on the ground and in the imagination.

[49] Baker, *Geography and History. Dividing the Bridge,* 211.

Part One "The Russian Berg Discourse as a Short Path to Modernity"

CHAPTER ONE
FLATLANDERS ENCOUNTER HIGHLANDS

This chapter starts with raising basic questions of the Russian physical movement in Siberia and Central Asia throughout the seventeenth century. It examines the ways in which highlands entered into Muscovites' imagination. The chapter argues that the encounter with these terrains challenged their spatial perception and made the early modern definition of mountains profoundly ambiguous. Historical sources are explored in order to understand how certain spatial frameworks were constructed through which Russians mapped highlands as complicated spaces of extreme experience and confrontation. It details the manners in which the writings and maps depicted this radically different environment. How did they distinguish mountains as physical places? What vocabulary did they draw on to communicate the new experience? How were mountain spaces represented in Muscovite discourses? Further, a mapping case of the Great Altai Rock will be discussed in detail.

1.1. Mountains in the Muscovite Life

After his journey through central Russian terrains in the 1630s, the traveler Adam Olearius resolutely labeled Muscovy a flatland.[50] The subjects of the tsar felt comfortable and protected inside the traditional universe of forests and flatbeds, rivers and lakes. However, they kept a safe distance from the Steppe or the so-called Wild Field, an equally flat but dangerous landscape inhabited by nomads.[51]

Prior to the conquest of Siberia, Russians lacked an idea of mountains as distinct material landforms. However, the presumption that the early modern concept of mountain was devoid of meaning should be considered critically, for it formed a complex interplay of physical and metaphorical meanings in the Russian mind. On a closer look, Muscovite mountains reveal multiple and sometimes puzzling semantics.

Russians were well familiar with mountains in various parts of everyday life. The right bank of rivers, a central feature to their existence, was called "mountain". In the broader meaning, it served as a general equivalent of the land surface; "to go on the

[50] Olearii, *Podrobnoe opisanie puteshestviia,* 69.
[51] Khodarkovsky, *Russia's Steppe Frontier*; Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field. Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe.*

mountain" (*idti goroiu)* meant to go overland.[52] The important geographical collection, "The Book of the Great Drawing" (*Kniga Bolshomu Chertezhu*) referred to several low-hill ranges that posed neither a concern nor jeopardy to locals.[53]

In the absence of real highlands, man-made elevations formed mountains to Russians. Masses of soil and stones *(gora)* were raised along the town walls to serve for defense.[54] Another type was a popular and lively element of social life: made out of wood and snow, seasonal ice hills (*ledianye gorki)* attracted scores of people at folk festivals. These man-made constructions figured as mountains in everyday life.

The early modern language indicated multilayered symbolical meanings of this notion. Mountain stood for unimaginable things and sizes; it embodied unresolved difficulties and unbearable feelings. Folk phraseology rhymed it with the similar sounding words sorrow (*gore*) and sea (*more*).[55] Long before the territorial expansion, the language connected this scene to a semantic variety of the distant Other. It implied an abstract site, a foreign country, a dangerous place, and an opposite to motherland.[56] Mountains occasionally appeared on the records' margins of the Russian pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the Middle East, Greek Athos and Orthodox Georgia, of church and state ambassadors to the Italian cities as well as those of Muscovite merchants, who traveled to Persia and India.[57] Their isolated experience did not make a large input to early modern literature. The travelers from agrarian Muscovy reduced their depictions and impressions of highlands to an ordinary mass of dried hay.[58]

However, along with depicting the geographical features of Muscovy, "The Book of the Great Drawing" would often point to several highlands in the southern and eastern borderlands. In particular, it referred to a mountain system that stretched between the Black and Khvalimskoe (Caspian) Seas and their native inhabitants.[59] Very soon, this range would be mapped as the Caucasus and become an important site of

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[52] *Slovar' drevnerusskogo iazyka 11-14 vv*., 354-55; Sreznevskii, *Slovar' drevnerusskogo iazyka*, 551; *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 11 – 17 veka*, IV, 78.
[53] *Kniga Bol'shomu chertezhu,* 49, 75, 77, 111, 143, 150*;* Rainov, *Nauka v Rossii 11-17 vekov,* 77-79; Barandeev, "Kniga Bol'shomu Chertezhu" kak istochnik issledovaniia", 136-143.
[54] *Slovar' russkogo iazyka*, IV, 78.
[55] Dal', *Poslovitsy russkogo naroda*, 147, 155, 157, 277.
[56] The songs "Devushka spasaetsia ot tatar", "Molodets zoviot devushku v Kazan'". *Istoriceskie pesni 13-16 vekov*, nos. 17, 100, 101; *Velikorusskie narodnye pesni*, nos. 31, 152, 161, 216, 292-293.
[57] "Puteshestvie Isidora Rossiiskago mitropolita na Florentiiskii sobor", Maletto, *Ontologiia khozhenii russkikh puteshestvennikov*, 12-15 vekov; Prokof'iev, *Zapiski russkikh puteshestvennikov 16-17 vekov*; *Russko-indiiskie otnosheniia v 17 veke*; "Posol'stvo vo Florentsiiu dvorianina Vasiliia Likhacheva".
[58] *Khozhenie Daniila Igumena Russkoi Zemli*, 168.
[59] *Kniga Bol'shomu chertezhu,* 88, 92, 146-47.

empire building. The early modern term *gorskii* referred exclusively to the multiethnic mountain people, who had frequent historical contacts with Muscovites.[60] The references to the mountainous tribes and regions were proudly added to the tsars' long official title.[61] Although further research on contemporary understanding of the title is needed, it seems that in some sense the early modern Muscovite sovereigns considered themselves the rulers of the Caucasus and its inhabitants.

What else could Muscovites learn about this landscape? The translations from the Cosmographies, the European geographical writings, posed one of the most reliable sources. However, the translators barely paid attention to the descriptions of the mountain areas. Only several unusual sites were briefly mentioned: "alpeiskie rocky mountains" (Swiss Alps), smoking volcanoes, "great and glorious ranges" in Minor Asia, and "the Glass or Crystal ranges" (*gory stekliannye*) that stretched for thousand versts across Asia.[62] However, the times, when the mountain descriptions would be translated into Russian without omissions, would be coming soon.

1.2. The Bitterness of the Landscape Confrontation

How did Russians encounter real mountains? When and why did they become exposed to highlands? At first, the gradual expansion eastwards introduced the Rocky Belt (the Ural) into the spatial orbit of the North Russian Novgorodians. After overcoming the northern rivals, Muscovites became more familiar with the range. In the eyes of contemporaries, the quite banal range posed "extremely tall highlands that reach the clouds".[63] Russians routinely added fantastic elements to the exotic feature in the tsar's domain. According to the Austrian Ambassador, Count von Herberstein, Prince Semen Kurbskii recollected that it had taken him seventeen days to reach the top of its tallest peak, the *Pillar*.[64]

With Muscovite colonial rule transforming North Asia into Siberia, Russians increasingly confronted diverse topographies. In spite of the absence of intervening seas, the newly conquered territories contained a tremendous variety of landscapes: river passages with swift currents and rapids, dense taiga forest, endless tundra, and a

[60] *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 11 – 17 veka*, IV, 96.
[61] *PSZ,* 1689, N. 1329: "*Gosudarei Iverskikh zemli Kartalinskikh i Gruzinskikh tsarei I Kabardinskie zemli Cherkasskikh i Gorskikh kniazei.*"
[62] *Kniga, glagolemaia Kozmografiia*, 479.
[63] "O strane sibirskoi", 8; "Esipovskaia letopis", 19.
[64] Gerbershtein, *Zapiski o moskovskikh delakh*, 132-33.

series of formidable mountain ranges. In particular, the latter presented a great contrast to the typical Russian plains. Everything was different about the highlands. Neither Muscovite low hillsides nor the Rocky Belt could serve as a point of departure in grasping the highlands' physical features and framing their otherness.

A dominant element of Russian geographies, rivers served as a point of departure in organizing the colonization in Siberia. Despite the unpredictable passages, they were free of obstacles and able to be travelled along. Muscovites gradually mastered the mighty streams of North Asia.[65] Even if the rivers started the course in the areas of "people of different lands", at least, their destination was clear.

On the contrary, the mountain ranges loomed large in the far distance; they emerged out of nowhere, and seemed to have no end behind the visible horizon. This was shown on one of the earliest drawings of Siberia that depicted a mountain range with a brief comment "Rock – there is no end" ("*Kamen' – kontsa ne imat'*").[66] Natural elevations posed a series of problems for early travelers, for they retarded communication between the dispersed outposts.[67]

Before we examine the mapping matters in detail, let us find out what made Russians travel through highlands of North Asia and the Caucasus in the seventeenth century. The tsar's favor dispatched faithful servants with ambassadorial duties to the foreign rulers. At the same time, the lack of favor resulted in penalty and Siberian exile for the less fortunate representatives of the Muscovite elites, as in the case of the priest Avvakum. Whether it was a punishment or promotion, the exposure to mountains entailed stress and jeopardy for health and life.[68]

Contemporary Europeans were intensively mapping the overseas colonies in diverse material and symbolical ways: travel accounts, the abundant cartographic materials, etc.[69] Did the exposure to highlands make Russians invent new representational practices? Obviously, there is no clear answer. Too occupied with counting and recounting expensive Siberian fur, the ruling elites barely cared about inventing the representations of the remote area. Probably, very few educated Muscovites had a clear idea of what was behind the Rocky Belt a century after the first

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[65] Bakhrushin, *Ocherki po istorii kolonizatsii Sibiri*, 110.
[66] *Chertiozhnaia Kniga Sibiri,* I, List 23.
[67] Rainov, *Nauka v Rossii,* 309.
[68] Early Russian pilgrims to the Holy Land experienced the same stress: "*no vse v gorakh kamennykhykh; i ti puto tiayzhek i strashen zelo*". "Khozhenie Daniila Igumena", 168.
[69] Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's conquest of the New World, 1492-1640;* Pagden, *Lords of the World. Ideologies of Empire in Spain, Britain and France c. 1500 - c.1800.*

Russian outpost was established in Siberia because the data was kept under strict control.[70]

But how could they represent a cognitive blank, something that was not available in their universe? The recently encountered landscapes posed a series of the substantial mapping problems to Muscovite colonists and travelers. How did they communicate their new topographical experience? What verbal and cartographic means of mapping were available? How did they translate the essential mountain features into a conventional and recognizable language?

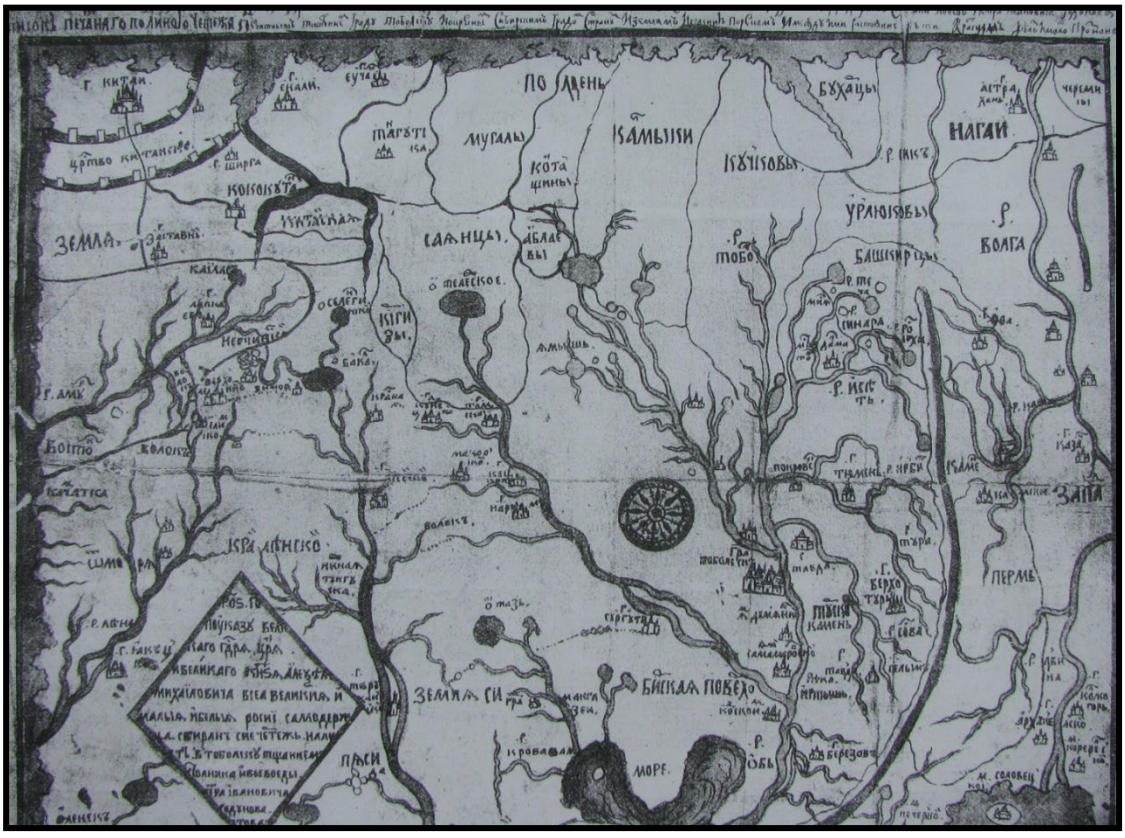

Figure 1. "The Drawing of Siberia" (1667) shows the lack of the mountain depictions on the maps.

Naturally, the flatlanders would map continuous frontier ranges as the Other landscape.[71] The other topography required a different language. In this regard, Russians referred to mountains with two major terms. Those were sometimes competing paradigms: the Slavonian mountain (*gora)* and the regional North Russian rock/stone (*kamen').* Occasionally, a rock cliff (*utios*) was at play, too.[72] Traveling

[70] Data concerning Siberia was considered secret. Rainov, *Nauka v Rossii*, 430.
[71] Duncan, "Sites of Representations", 39-56; Frank,"Sibirien: Peripherie und Anderes der russischen Kultur", 357-381.
[72] Porokhova, *Leksika sibirskikh letopisei 17 veka*, 149; *Slovar' russkogo iazyka*, *IV, 78;* Rozen, *Slovar' geograficheskikh terminov Zapadnoi Sibiri, 28*; *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 11-17 vv.,* VII, 45-46; VI, 78.

Muscovites preferred *gora*, whilst Siberian Russians would stick to *kamen*, which resonated with the early Novgorodian variant. Novgorodians were the first to colonize the Rocky Belt, and Muscovites only followed their paths.

Thus, the North Russian regionalism stood for the multi-semantic Other. A collective concept of *kamen'* encapsulated mountain ranges of various geological backgrounds dispersed across Siberia. The locals frequently deployed the indispensable term: on the eastward course, they passed through the Rocky Belt; all ranges were referred to as *Kamen*. This generic term indicated the internal and external features: mountainous areas, ranges, peaks, rocks, and various kinds of ore.

Where were the new topographical sensibilities manifested? The textual inventories enclosed to the early imperfect drawings of Siberia posed an important source. However, the bulk of the new spatial experience was deeply encoded in the Muscovite servants' detailed travel reports and accounts (*stateinye spiski, skazki, rassprossnye rechi)*.[73] A spatially oriented framework explores these extensive sources as a rare glimpse into the Russian response to the alien environment. How did they represent the physicality of mountains in the road reports? What were the principles of familiarizing the fundamentally unfamiliar? How did the imagination accommodate to the other topographical scene?

These disassociated fragments reflected Muscovites' subjective experience of mountains. On the whole, desperate and hopeless rhetoric filled the disturbing passages. The journey through the mountainous areas of the Caucasus and Asia was presented as a distinctive experience full of unseen hazards. To some extent, it seems that the mountain references appeared in the accounts only due to the extreme range of emotions that overfilled the servants.[74] The physical reality of the highlands made the travelers feel vulnerable, whereas a face-to-face confrontation with the never seen scene disabled both the early language and its unfortunate speakers from an adequate depiction of this landscape.

What all travelers had in common was a sense of a shock. Even the highly educated Greek Spafarii failed to rationalize moments of the transformative experience on his way along the Baikal Lake: "only cliffs and stones, and, in one word, very fearful,

[73] Andreev, "Geograficheskie istochniki o Sibiri 17 veka", 19-87.
[74] Baddeley, I, 227; *Posol'stvo stol'nika Tolochanova i diaka Kliuchareva v Imeretiiu* , 121.

especially to those who have not been here before because all around there are very lofty snowy mountains, impassable forests, and rock cliffs".[75]

At the same time, it was not only about the rhetorical inabilities of the travelers. Even earlier depictions had hardly focused on the natural environment.[76] Russians packed their mountain phobia into a brief and desperate formula: "sufferings overcome a man!" (*strasti cheloveka izymut*!).[77] Their visions were freighted with topoi of fear and an undesirable experience that they wished to leave behind as soon as possible. Unsurprisingly, out of desperation, the exiled priest Avvakum rhymed his topographical stress with a sense of unbearable sorrow, when he lifted his eyes up to the hills of East Siberia and echoed the Psalms: "Alas! High mountains, impassable terrains, a rocky cliff stands like a wall, and to look on it – raise up your head!"[78]

The accounts from the Asian and European roads repeated verbatim the testimonies from the Caucasus. In a space of disorientation and anxieties, travelers and horses were subjected to a great deal of suffering, as pain and loss waited on their way through the rough terrain. The Caucasian reports would frequently refer to the dangerous natives (*gorskie luidi*), who either robbed the intimidated flatlanders or pushed them off the narrow roads (*z gor pikhat*).[79]

The mountain terrain bore a threatening presence from another perspective, too. It lacked the qualities crucial for Russians' environment, since it could not support their traditional agriculture. For that reason, it was defined primarily in terms of a landlocked place that could not support a human life. The standard depiction would evolve around certain logic: there were neither villages nor fields, neither water nor food for people and cattle, the soil was unsuited for cultivation, etc.[80] The mountain iconographies were mapped in terms of austerity and extremity. The subjects of the Russian crown depicted natural elevations as sites of human failure and fear, and their observations resembled the reports of contemporary Europeans traveling across the Alps.[81] A folk song resonated this experience: "Ah, you, steep mountains, you have born nothing, neither grass nor flowers, you have born only great sorrow."[82]

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[75] Spafarii, "Puteshestvie cherez Sibir'", 116-117.
[76] Russian earlier accounts hardly described natural environment. Rainov*, Nauka v Rossii*, 257-58.
[77] "Rospis' Petlina", 42.
[78] *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma*, 70.
[79] "Posol'stvo kniazia Volkonskogo", 252-254, 358; "Stateinyi spisok Ipatskogo monastyria arkhimandrita Iosifa", 417.
[80] Baddeley, I, 227; *RMO,* I, 60-66.
[81] De Beer, *Early Travellers in the Alps*.
[82] *Velikorusskie narodnye pesni*, no. 356.

Did Russians make any attempts to symbolically appropriate the mountain terrains they traversed? Apparently, they were too challenged, physically and emotionally, while overcoming the tough terrain. As they were barely surviving on the road, no wonder, their reports hardly referred to any native orographic data. In the mid-16540s, Fiodor Baikov headed the diplomatic mission to Beijing that traveled across the Mongolian Altai. What could have been the earliest Russian reference to the Altai was characterized by its total absence. Immersed in depicting the harsh environment, Baikov did not bother to mention the name of the place: "one goes between rocky mountains; they are very tall, great snow does not melt; there is neither water nor food for cattle, these are waterless places, cattle dies just severely".[83]

Traditionally, the Holy Scripture attributes special spiritual features to the mountains. The Church-Slavonian notion of *gornii* denoted high excellence and sublimity.[84] However, even Avvakum, the founding father of the Russian mountain poetry, felt no inspiration to draw spiritual parallels with the topographical realities of Siberia. The dominant landscape optic of the period excluded a sense of awe even in educated travelers. Rather, the encounter formed an incomparable spatial experience. On his way from the Siberian exile back to Muscovy, Avvakum reached the mountainous coasts of Baikal Lake: "Near it, there are tall mountains, tall rocky cliffs, I have been dragging myself twenty thousand versts, but I have not seen such things anywhere."[85]

Along with the descriptions of the unparalleled experience, the margins of the Muscovite records accommodated the references to prehistoric petroglyphs carved on the Siberian rocks (*kameni*). Servants reported about several strange sites that contained the rocks carvings of animals and birds.[86]

1.3. The Great Altai Rock

The cartographic depiction of the mountain ranges was as difficult as the verbal one. The Russian design varied greatly from the European cartography that advanced

[83] *Stateinyi spisok F.I. Baikova*, Var. 2, 121; "O pervykh rossiiskikh puteshestvennikah v Kitai", 15-57.
[84] *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 11-17 vv.*, IV, 87-88.
[85] *Zhitie protopopa Avvakuma*, *86*.
[86] "O Sibirskom tsarstve i o tsariakh togo vremeni", pt. 1. 404.

with diverse means of showing the mountain relief.[87] How did Muscovites approach this task? Did they utilize the European traditions?

Indeed, they operated with a limited set of choices. Depending on the mental horizons, the Russian draftsmen (*chertiozhniki*) would depict the looming Other in two basic ways. To accommodate mountains on paper they would either reduce them to short bold stripes, which hardly differed from the water streams, or ignored them for an abundant depiction of rivers.[88] (Figure 1) Before Semen Remezov's drawings of the late 1690s, the single exception was the map of Asia by Greek Spafarii, who had served at the European courts prior to moving to Muscovy. Arranged in a neat order, the hills on his map greatly differed from other depictions.[89]

Why were mountains underrepresented at this stage of colonization? It occurred for the following reasons. There was no perceived need to depict them. They played a minor role, if any, in the Russian world. The draftsmen were not eager to borrow from the European traditions either. Unlike the rivers, natural elevations were too bizarre and had no particular value that would make them worthy of being represented. Obviously, the Siberian mapmakers learned to translate their knowledge of colonial space into the detailed symbolic language of drawings. The comment of geographer Y-Fu Tuan precisely applies to the experience of the colonial and central elites: "Cartographic ability presupposes not only a talent for abstraction and symbolization on the part of the primitive cartographer but also a comparable talent in the person who looks on, for he must know how to translate wriggly lines and dots back into real terrain."[90] It seems that the provincial servants did nothing to help the viewers in Muscovy imagine what exactly filled the blank terrains of Siberia.

While analyzing Russian servicemen's conceptualization of frontier space, Valery Kivelson has pointed out that: "the Siberian images required the Muscovite elites to use their imaginations to rework familiar images of nature for a very different context".[91] What mental images did they re-translate the representations of the mountains into? How can we measure the cognitive efforts required to translate bizarre elements into something that they had never experienced? Did they use the inventive

[87] Delano-Smith, "Signs on Printed Topographical Maps", 547.
[88] Rainov*, Nauka v Rossii*, 400, 403-6; Grekov, "O chertezhe vsei Sibiri do Kitaiskogo tsarstva", 80-88; Goldenberg "'Russian Cartography to ca. 1700", 1852-1903.
[89] Efimov et al. *Atlas geograficheskikh otkrytii v Sibiri,* no. 32.
[90] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 77.
[91] Kivelson, "Claming Siberia. Colonial possession and property holding", 24.

power of the imagination to fill the cognitive blank of Russian space? The lack of the linguistic and visual means that could have communicated the physicality of mountains caused a cognitive asymmetry, a situation, in which central officials had a weaker grip on Siberia than the local servants did. However, the focus should be shifted from what the rulers were able to imagine to the fact that mountains procured a stable niche in the regional reports.

However, Muscovites advanced with mapping by gradually gathering more geographical data about highland areas under their command as well as beyond. They mostly registered the names; exact location was out of question, since their drawings lacked a grid and scientific proportions. Even though Russian records failed to register the Altai in the mid-century, this place-name emerged in three important writings: the topographic inventory of "The Drawing of Siberia (1672), which is no longer extant, "The Tobolskaia Edition" in the "Book of the Great Drawing" (1673), and "The Description of the Siberian Tsardom" (the 1680s).[92] These sources treated the Altai in two ways: as a highland and as a region in North West Mongolia inhabited by "people of different lands". In any case, it was located beyond Muscovites' spatial command.

Russians would have been surprised to discover that European imaginary geographies had been well familiar with the Altai for several centuries. In his narration about Great Tartary, Marco Polo referred to '*Altay Mountain'* as a burial site of the Grand Genghis Khan and his descendants.[93] The legend omitted exact details in order to mislead potential visitors from bothering the Mongolian rulers. The extant manuscripts misspelled the name in the multiple ways: *alchai, elcay, dalcay*, etc.[94]

Freighted with an unusual meaning, the Altai entered into the European cartography on the world map "Il Mappamondo" (1459).[95] The very northeastern edge of Asia accommodated *alchai mons* with the tag *sepultura imperial*, a miniature tomb and the Latin inscription *Alchai mons in quo Regum Tartariae sepulchral sunt.* This would become standard for many further representations.[96] Size, shape and location varied from map to map, as *Altai/Althay/Alchai* traversed across Asia's depictions.

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[92] Baddeley, I, CXXXIII; Titov, *Sibir' v 17 veke*, 41-54, 76.
[93] The Book of Sir Marco Polo, I, 246.
[94] The list was longer: *achai, chai, alcay, alcaym, alchahy, alchai, alchaim, alchay, allai, altai, batai, altay, dalcay, elcay*. Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo*, I, 30-31.
[95] Il Mappamondo di Fra Mauro, Tavola XXXVIII.
[96] Ortelius, Asia Nova Descriptio, 1570; Gastaldi, Tertia Partis Asia, 1578, etc.

Although familiar with the European maps, Russians remained unaware of the Altai's mysterious background. The gap between the ways of generating and communicating the knowledge was too wide to bridge; Muscovites were neither able to grasp nor share the invisible strands of symbolic geographies behind the Altai.

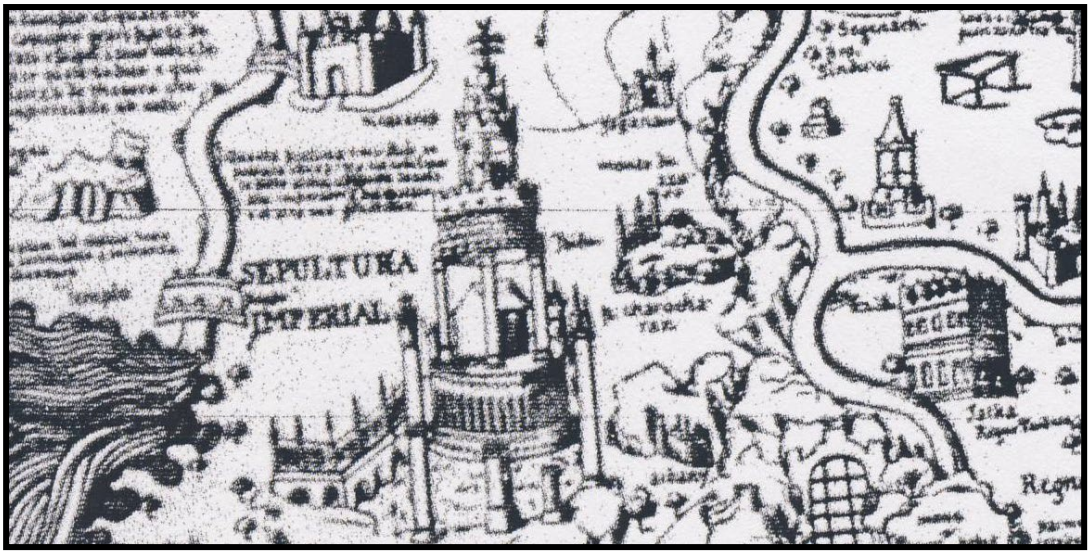

Figure 2. A detail from "Il Mappamondo" (1459) depicted „alchai mons".

The Dutch man of letters, Nikolaas Witsen, drew from both European and Muscovite sources for his map "Great Tartaria" (1687). He placed *Altai, steene geberge* (rocky mountains) roughly between Mugalia Nigra (Mongolia), Regnum Cabul (Afghanistan), Turkestan Cascar (Xinjiang in modern China), and Tibet.[97]

The Siberian draftsman Semen Remezov frequently referred to the Altai in the late 1690s.[98] By singling it out, he rendered it in richer detail, for no other range on his works was depicted with such intensity. Remezov made an important step in mapping this feature. He invented an imaginary background of the Altai on his own, something that strikingly differs from contemporary and later styles. His approach posed a remarkable exception to the Russian ways of the knowledge production.

But why would the mapmaker discern a particular highland that he had never seen in person, when Russians referred to all ranges equally as *Kamen'*? Why would it captivate his imagination? One important point to note is that Remezov drew from the indigenous Turkic and Mongolian spatial knowledge and oral traditions. Direct contacts with "people of different lands" provided him with valuable information about many Asian ranges. These sources became blended in his unique vision, as none of his

[97] Baddeley, *Russia, Mongolia, China,* CXLVIII-CLII.
[98] *The Atlas of Siberia*, nos. 99, 169; *Chertiozhnaia Kniga Sibiri*, I, List 20, 21.

contemporaries referred to this. (Figures 3, 4) Remezov's work mixed real and imaginary data into a fantastic representation of the Great Altai Rock, an incredibly long and tall range stretching from Asian heartland to the Pacific Ocean.

"The Great Altai Rock is over the clouds;
It takes a week to reach its top, and a week to descend;
Created by God as a main source of all great rivers:
The Irtysh, the Ob, the Selenga, the Chinese Huang Ho,
The Indian Ganges and many Kalmuck rivers".[99]

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Since the early seventeenth century, Asian highlands entered into the Russian geographies as problematic and ambivalent spaces. Colonization of Siberia expanded their imagination and stimulated new verbal and visual practices of the spatial knowledge generation. Mostly produced by traveling and provincial officials in the service of the Muscovite monarch, these representations treated mountains as distinctive environmental areas and barriers to movement and communication in colonizing the unknown lands. Russians' encounter with the ranges, which stretched from horizon to horizon, could have remained a singular spatial experience with a flavor of despair. This was largely how things would stay until a crucial change in the Russian attitudes to the highlands occurred.

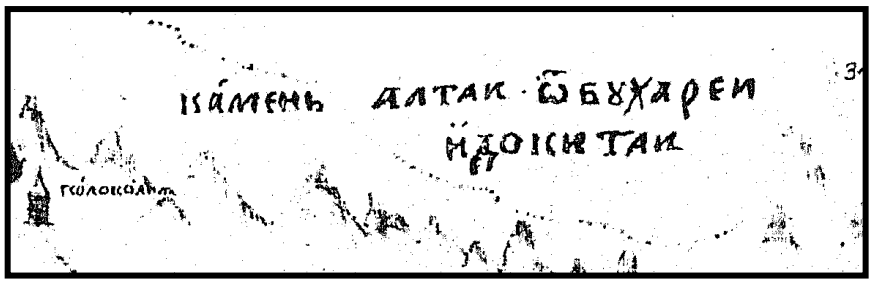

Fig. 3. A detail from S. Remezov's "The Map of Siberia to the Chinese Borders".

Fig. 4. A detail from S. Remezov's "The Map of All the Waterless and Difficult Country".

[99] *Chertiozhnaia Kniga Sibiri*, I, List 20.

CHAPTER TWO
BREAKING UP ORE WITH THE IRONBARS

The conquest of North Asia challenged Russian spatial perception in diverse ways.[100] However, the exposure to the other topographical scene entailed more than the experiences of extremity. Whilst the tsar's servicemen and Orthodox priests desperately struggled on their way through the highland passes, literate Muscovites comfortably stayed at home and leafed through the translations of the European writings. In spite of the multiple omissions in the mountain depictions, curious readers could learn that foreign highlands contained multitudes of valuable minerals, something, that the self-proclaimed Third Rome had only a vague clue about.[101] Due to the geological structure of the flatland, the tsardom counted only on salt, iron and mica. Ironically, one of mica's kinds would be called *Muscovy glass* or *muscovite*.[102]

Naturally, lack of own resources made Muscovites turn towards expanding eastern frontiers. Attracted by resource wealth, the tsarist rule advanced deeply into North Asia transforming it into a colonial Siberia. Complicated geological processes had turned local ranges into containers of valuable ore. How did Russians imagine the mountains in relation to minerals? Did they invent a different frame of representation? How did they translate the mountain topographies into a recognizable material code?

Throughout the century, lack of interest in natural elevations began to change, as they were in the midst of connecting the mountains with the sources of minerals. Previously avoided, these terrains became a point of interest for the ruling elites. Apparently, the changes of such magnitude formed not a single moment that all of a sudden produced a distinct attitude toward mountains, but a range of processes in which new approaches opened up along the way. We will treat this complicated process as a series of the spatial shifts in attitudes towards highlands.

When and how did a series of the sustained changes of the attitudes to mountain space take place? What was the scale of these shifts? An outworn poetical metaphor of

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[100] On the transformation of spatial perceptions see: Harvey, "Between Space and Time", 444.
[101] "Sirech opisaniia sego sveta zemel' i gosudarstv velikikh", 44-45, 163, 342; "Kniga, glagolemaia Kosmografiia", 469; "Izbranie vkrattse ot knigi glalolemye Kosmografiia", 532.
[102] Olearii, *Podrobnoe opisanie*, 123.

imperial Russia's securing a window on the West suggests that changes to the spatial perception could be grasped and become evident only afterwards. Obviously, the paradigmatic change bridged the otherwise unbridgeable gap between Muscovites and hostile Asian highlands. The discovery of mineral deposits eclipsed the travelers' gloomy experience in the mountain terrains. The shifts in attitude brought shifts in representations. The full impact came with a more sensitive way of mapping that can now be uncovered in the writings. Russian symbolical geographies comfortably accommodated two descriptive modes, as the mountains' representations moved gradually from empty and worthless space to the economically freighted areas. The former emerged from the occasional encounters on the road, whereas the latter captured this landscape in more material and regular terms.

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. By detailing Russians' resource activities in Siberia and beyond, it argues that the Muscovite elites and mineral modernity came together in a particular place and time. My central argument is that the shifting attitudes to mountains served as a fertile soil for generating a new spatial framework; the early modern Berg Discourse. The mineral framework of the territorial claim structured their perception of mountain spaces, and provided a modern foundation for organizing and classifying the colonial Siberia. What laid the groundwork for the shift? What were the basic structures of the new framework? How did the elites' concerns catalyze the early discourse? First, movements behind the shift are illustrated. Second, the institutions and personalities associated with the discourse are identified.

The chapter discerns different moments in the rise of mineral modernity. It examines the mechanisms of the making of resource knowledge that can be understood by revealing the contemporary context. What were the ways and narratives in which this knowledge was constructed? Further on, the chapter pieces together the knowledge making networks and highlights the uneven circuits in which knowledge was generated in particular locations for particular reasons. *Mineral mapping,* the central practice of the early Berg Discourse, will be explored in detail. It argues further that this practice established a certain sense of modern spatial order. The discussion will evolve around three Who-questions: Who produced spatial knowledge and how? Who shaped early modern resource discourses: the central elites or those on-site? Finally, who can be identified as early modern Russian masters over mountains and minerals?

2.1. A View from Outside: The Muscovite Perspective

Historical records show the Muscovite rulers' keen interest in minerals prior to the conquest of North Asia. The charter on colonizing the Ugra River in West Ural that Tsar Ivan Vasilievich (the Terrible) granted to merchant Grigorii Stroganov in the late sixteenth century contained a set of clear instructions about what to do when ore would be discovered.[103]

To the central rulers, colonization of Siberia entailed a continued exposure to distant geographical space. It is evident that the involvement with natural resources posed the most tangible way of making sense of the Russian Mundo Nuevo. In this way, the newly conquered territories behind the Rocky Belt could be literally seen, smelled, and touched. Along with the streams of soft and silky fur, coveted minerals formed the main means by which Siberia made itself known to central power makers.[104]

Colonial pragmatists relentlessly pursued material interest (*koryst'*) out of Siberia.[105] Aimed at procuring the highest profits by investing minimal efforts, the rulers' economic focus and ambitions were at the heart of the shift. Of course, as a driving force, it was also true of other colonizing societies; the seventeenth century Muscovy was no exception to these trends. Their colonial inclinations were otherwise fully comparable to those of contemporary West Europeans.[106]

Fortunately, Siberian natives were not required to make obligatory payments in minerals to the Romanovs' crown. Otherwise, the Russian Berg Discourse would have taken different paths. The basic difference between fur and minerals would be easy to catch: fur was a moving target, mineral deposits sat deeply underground; fur was counted by pieces, ore by puds. The heavily armed Cossack collectors of the fur tribute and well-paid European ore-experts (*rudoznatsy*) toiled together on taming distant lands. However, the principal difference was that the efficient resource extraction

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[103] Miller, *Istoria Sibiri*, nos. 2-3, 5.
[104] *DAI,* IV, no. 57; *PSZ,* 1666, N. 391; *Sbornik Kniazia Khilkova*, no. 68, 188-94; Bakhrushin, "Iasak v Sibiri 17 veka", 49-85; Bassin, *Expansion and colonialism on the eastern frontier*: 12; Gibson, "Russian imperial expansion in context and and by contrast", 181-202; Kivelson, "Claming Siberia", 27; Etkind, "Barrels of fur: Natural resources and the state in the long history of Russia", 164-171.
[105] *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 11-17 vv.,* X, 192-3.
[106] Wolf, *Europe and the People without History*, pt. 2.

required modern knowledge and management, whereas the successful collecting of fur depended on a plain combination of violence, vodka, gifts, and gunpowder.

The ruling elites' concerns, compulsions and actions formed a discursive starting point for the exploitation of natural reserves for Muscovy and further successors. In this light, basic contours of the emerging spatial control became apparent within power relations of the early modern Russian state. The new branch will be further referred to as power over space and minerals, or the Berg Discourse. It is evident that this kind of spatial control over colonies and potential deposits posed a branch distinct from other forms of state control. It reads as a clear dimension of spatial modernity that transformed vague borderlands into a focus of the intense interest of the central and regional rulers. By assessing the remote environment through material concerns, they increased their outreach far beyond.

What makes this spatial power new? In terms of mineral exploitation, Muscovy had already gathered much experience with extracting salt and mining iron. Perhaps, one of its principal novelties lay in the extensive expansion eastwards and the soon-to-be available resources. Our understanding of nature of the Berg Discourse might be enhanced by the recognition that its essential dimensions took shape there and then and not somewhere else. There is another way to make this point: if we ignore the emerging discourse now, it makes us register its absence in early Muscovy prior to the conquest of Siberia.

What built up the institutional frame of early mineral control? It was dispersed among too many governmental agencies (*prikazy*).[107] Especially the bodies that managed the tsar's private property kept a close eye on mineral mapping.[108]

What were the major features of the Berg Discourse in terms of the knowledge production? A basic matrix "*spatial power – mountains – minerals*" became apparent in the early modern time. This template would be effectively reproduced and reshaped in the coming periods. A specific body of spatial knowledge was gradually gathered throughout much of the century.

The early modern Berg Discourse manifested itself through a set of the diverse material and symbolical practices. At this early stage, two points are key: (1) an inherent

[107] Sibirskii Prikaz, Posol'skii Prikaz, Prikaz Bol'shoi Kazny, Streletskii Prikaz, Oruzheinaia Palata, Pushechnyi dvor, Prikaz Bol'shogo Dvortsa, etc. *DAI*, IV, no. 57; Deriabin, *Istoricheskoe opisanie gornykh del*, 10; Ogloblin, *Obozrenie stolbtsov i knig Sibirskogo prikaza 1592-1768*, Pt. 3, 82-84; Pavlenko, *Razvitie metallurgicheskoi promyshlennosti,* 90.
[108] Novombergskii et al., "Materialy k istorii razvedki", 50.

discursive link between mountains and valuable minerals; (2) Muscovy's modern power over the newly conquered colonies and resources. The clusters of concerns served as a fertile soil for emerging spatial modernities rooted in natural resources. The rulers began to view and construct visions of mountains in ways that can be tagged as modern. The recently encountered environment was re-interpreted through the mineral framework and mobilized for further exploitation. This framework affected the principal ways of handling the highlands in the elites' imagination.

The speed of the territorial growth did not ensure an automatic acquisition of mineral knowledge, however. The latter required an unprecedented coordination of central and regional efforts at resource mobilization, networks of skilled and adequate experts. Apart from gathering the accurate data and using organizing principles, the creation of an infrastructure of forts, communication, logistics, was required.[109] Stuck in a microcosm of corruption and inefficiencies, deeply flawed Muscovite state needed light years to get closer to a modern level of geological surveying and systematic mining.

The making of the Berg Discourse depended on a number of multilayered practices, brought together under the umbrella *mineral mapping*. It implied an intensive search and accumulation of the territorial and topographical data. Mineral mapping was ascribed a high geopolitical priority, equal to bringing new native groups and areas under the Russian crown.[110]

Before turning to the producing of spatial knowledge, a short review of the languages in which Muscovites sought to frame their mineral experience is in order. In the previous chapter, we have briefly summarized the early mountain vocabulary. The overview of the mineral language is especially worthy in this regard, as it reveals several attempts at constructing the paradigms of the emerging discourse. The deeply desired minerals were referred to in a number of ways: as the Slavonian ruda (ore), the Polish borrowing *krushets* (cruszec*)*, and the indispensable North Russian regionalism kamen (rock).[111] The language conceptualized 'what' and 'where' in the puzzling ways: minerals (rudy, krushets, kamen') were mapped across mountains, rocks and cliffs (gory, kamni, utiosy).

[109] Sunderland, "Imperial Space: Territorial Thought and Practice", 33-34.
[110] *ZRP*, 361; *AI,* V, no. 72.
[111] Sreznevskii, *Materialy dlia slovaria drevnerusskogo iazyka,* 187; *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 11 – 17 vv.*, VIII, 92; XXII, 233.

It is evident that early Siberian colonizers overloaded the generic and indispensable *kamen* with the topographical and geological meanings, as the following examples clearly illustrate: *kamen znatno otvalivalsia iz gory; poshli v gory v kameni; priiskali v gore, v sinem kameniu.*[112] Hardly comprehensible from today's perspective, these may sound like word games. Despite the seemingly overlapping semantics, the early modern communication worked out perfectly, however.

How did the center obtain valuable resource knowledge? The strict instructions and orders (*nakaznye pamiati, nakazy*) to the Siberian and traveling Muscovite servicemen concealed the essential inquiry mechanism.[113] Once read through the discursive lens, the official correspondence reveals a target-oriented tool for procuring the comprehensible resource data. These sometimes well but often ill- defined guidelines provided the major structural framework through which central groups perceived distant geographical space and formed a view of their own. As a standard part in the instructions, mineral inquiries aimed to ensure that the central administrators could establish a full and detailed picture of the resource deposits.

The instructions repeatedly required the provincial officials to collect data by a variety of activities: inquire, search, look out, seek carefully, observe, investigate, examine, depict, etc. Along with the ore, the supreme ruler enumerated other important issues that his servants were obliged to focus upon: "[...] to inquire about the Dauria area, and about golden and silver ore, and about ornamental fabrics, and to observe carefully and closely".[114] The lists of material priorities were extensive, but, as a rule, precious metals would always remain on top. It is tempting to quote such an inquiry: "[…] where are born gold, and silver, and copper, and iron, and tin, and lead, and pearls, and expensive stones, and black walrus tusks, and velvets are made, and silk, and colors to dye, and all kinds of ornamental goods".[115] However, the official correspondence centered on two basic questions concerning minerals' quantity and location: 'How much ore is there?' and 'How far from the Russian forts is it located?'

The regional reports accelerated the government's growing interest in Siberian resources that was vital to the emergence of the Berg Discourse. Hundreds of pages of travel and regional accounts gave central elites a wealth of resource information to

[112] *DAI*, VI, no. 85, 96; *Sbornik Kniazia Khilkova*, no. 68, 188-94.
[113] *Nakaz Afanasiiu Pashkovu na voevodstvo v Daurskoi zemle* (1655), 2-5, 10-16.
[114] *RKO,* I, no. 78, 199-203.
[115] Ibid.

peruse and make conclusions. Most obviously, these accounts would allow for better knowledge of the colonial realm. How long did it take the officials to process and digest the reports? Did they attempt to control the knowledge production at all? Eventually, the central elites registered and evaluated the flawed accounts closely, as the stream of the follow-up instructions to the regional agents and the launch of the new projects prove. At many points, central officials' attempts to control knowledge production were not coherent. However, whether their moves succeeded or failed is irrelevant, what is certain is that they were only passive consumers of the intellectual product that appeared somewhere along the power hierarchy. Who generated early modern resource knowledge? What served as sources for producing this crucial information? What were the early sites and social spaces of mineral mapping located?

2.2. A View from Inside: the Siberian Perspective

Things did not look the same from the dispersed Siberian forts. Heralds (*biruchi*) announced the tsar's occasional orders on mineral mapping in public spaces of the dispersed towns. Hypothetically, with a fair amount of efforts, early colonizers could discover and extract minerals to benefit themselves and the state treasure. Independent individuals started mapping at their own expense; these single fortune-seekers would search and map on their own for years. Upon discovering ore deposits, mineral prospectors were required to report to the regional administrators and submit a tenth of their findings to the state. Sometimes, the tsar encouraged particular individuals with decrees that were meant to facilitate their work.[116]

However, these sporadic activities did not make the bulk of mineral knowledge. For the sake of gathering accurate information, the servants were required to take regular action at the local level. It is evident that the establishment of a full and accurate picture heavily depended on the regional officials. The proximity to the potential resource settings made them the main producers of the significant knowledge. Mighty and corruptive Siberian administrators, the voevodas, represented the Russian state in all resource matters on-site. Empowered by the distant tsar's will with organizing mineral mapping, they acted as key regional power brokers in this important project.[117] Their offices brought together multiple sites of the knowledge making.

[116] *DAI*, IV, no. 57.
[117] *AI,* V, no. 72; Ibid., no. 258; Chicherin, *Oblastnye uchrezhdeniia Rossii*, 244-48.

Regional rulers literally stood at the crossroads of all groups involved in the knowledge production: they supervised local servants, communicated with the native chiefs, facilitated foreign experts' work, and assisted the travelling Muscovite diplomatic missions.

How did central rulers motivate and make local subordinates become dedicated to the pursuit of better mapping and understanding about natural resources? Yet, it was one thing to lay down guidelines and requirements, but it was quite another to secure compliance from mostly illiterate regional servants whose incompetence, neglect of duty, or even hidden disobedience meant that they would often fail to provide exact data on minerals' whereabouts.

As the Siberian administrators reported directly to the monarch, they performed a key function in presenting the correct data. Their crucial position allowed them, at least hypothetically, to withhold valuable knowledge, manipulate it or present wrong geographical data, as in the case of the mighty Siberian governor Matvei Gagarin that will be discussed in the next chapter. Regional power brokers could facilitate mineral mapping as well as slow it down according to their own interests. Local servants regularly replaced best-quality fur from the iasak-tribute with the poor-quality substitutes before dispatching them to the Muscovite court.[118] What could prevent them to do the same with minerals and metals? The problem of a long distance and a slow communication made supervising these matters difficult for the central elites. Until a trusted alternative could be found, the Siberian administrators firmly held the position of local masters over mountains and minerals.

Even on the regional level, mineral mapping entailed multiple power scenarios. The officials needed the tsar's approval and financial means to launch mapping operations and hire workers.[119] Minerals posed an object of fierce competition between the Siberian administrators, as the case of the Turinskii and Tobolskii voevodas illustrate.[120] In terms of resource governing, distribution and balance of power was evident; e.g. the Kuznetskii district ruler was to report on mineral matters directly to the Tomskii voevoda.[121] Low ranked servants and ore experts were too well aware of

[118] *PSZ*, 1695, N. 1512.
[119] *DAI*, IV, no. 83, art. 2.
[120] Miller, "Sibirskaia Istoriia. Chast' Os'maia", 345- 512.
[121] *DAI*, VI, no 96.

various possibilities of replacing and manipulating ore specimen somewhere along the tiresome and long way to Muscovy.[122]

Human landscapes of the early knowledge making formed a mixed picture. The government employed all available means for recruiting the European experts, mostly of German and Greek origin, for the Muscovite service. Various people engaged in mapping Siberia on-site; Russian nobles and European professionals, as well as illiterate Cossacks from the dispersed outposts.[123] It is hard to properly estimate the exact numbers of Muscovites and foreigners directly involved in mineral mapping. The presence of the more experienced and technologically advanced Europeans often caused a sense of envy among Russian servants, who would use any opportunity to report to authorities about foreigners' presumed neglect of duty.[124]

We can discern in this incoherent picture a network of interconnected people through whom snippets of information circulated before becoming translated into more or less settled knowledge. In order to attain better results, central rulers attempted to set up a sort of the early modern trans-regional networks. They comprised the servants from the dispersed Siberian forts, who regularly dispatched their findings and pieces of minerals to Moscow, and skilled foreign individuals working on the ground. While processing the data, and, too often unable to take effective measures, central agencies would dispatch colonial minerals further to West Europe for proper assessment and testing (*uchinit' podlinnyi opyt*).[125]

What locations served as sites of the knowledge generation? Apparently, Siberian towns and forts were not the only settings. Although saved from making the obligatory payments to the Muscovite crown in minerals, the natives were required, often by force, to add their input into colonizers' increasing appetite for spatial knowledge.[126] Strictly speaking, any Russian encounter with the natives, particularly while extracting the fur tribute, could turn into a formal test on mineral deposits. These cross-cultural encounters included the colonizers' continual inquiries, translations, and further attempts to pinpoint the exact whereabouts of the deposits. At this early stage as well as later, the natives performed a valuable service to the making of the Berg Discourse by forming a further chain in the knowledge networks.

[122] *DAI*, IV, no. 63.
[123] *DAI*, VI, no. 24, art. III, no. 135, XII; *PSZ*, 1696, N. 1561; 1666, N. 392.
[124] *DAI*, IV, no. 24, pt. III.
[125] *PSZ,* 1695, N. 1512.
[126] *DAI*, VIII, no. 85, art. V.

How was producing and communicating of knowledge carried out? The cumulative and discrete process unfolded at two levels. First, Siberian servicemen and foreign experts assiduously mapped the territories under Russian command. Second, while dispatched with the missions to the Asian lands, central and frontier officials of higher ranks were entrusted with a special assignment of gathering secret resource information. Debriefed after each trip, they were to submit a detailed statement (*skazki*) covering all relevant matters. The voevodas were regularly required to present formal accounts on mineral matters, too. These reports ensured a regular stream of resource information to Muscovy.

The constructing of knowledge went through different stages, languages, and people, who would shape it according to their intentions and interests. Distinct forms of hybrid data circulated across loose and multiethnic networks before becoming translated into acceptable and understandable knowledge in the officials' authoritative reports. At this point, the knowledge making was mobile and multilingual; it required colonizers' inquiries, indigenous knowledge, Europeans experts' valuable input, and basic analytical skills of the central officials.

What sort of knowledge did the regional agents and traveling servicemen produce? Assigned with an important task, they lacked everything – from the proper preparation and skills to tools and technologies that would enable them to fulfill their ruler's high will. Apparently, very few of them had ever seen or melted genuine minerals; there were very too few experts on-site. Aware of this, central agencies dispatched to the Siberian administrators specimen of minerals procured from Europe that would enable them to discern between different materials.[127] However, there were not enough ore samples to provide all towns and forts with the geological substance.

The business of collecting resource information was not easy. The reports reveal different methods and limits of information gathering. Nevertheless, the faithful servants implemented resource mapping by employing a specific method of the knowledge production. In a vigorous search, they collected data that became blended with rumors and unverified accounts about metal deposits. These nuggets of half-truths successfully served as a point of departure for mineral mapping.

How reliable were these accounts? Strictly speaking, their data could hardly be trusted neither in terms of the correct geographical location nor of the geological

[127] *DAI*, VI, no. 24, art. IV.

features. Created with an eye to the possible reaction of the Muscovite administration, the regional reports fulfilled a double-sided purpose of communicating the required data at the one hand and confirming loyalty at the other. None of these more or less carefully worded sources can be read as "clean" evidence of motivations and ambitions of the regional and travelling officials.

Their flawed mapping did not have to grapple with questions of credibility of results, however. By bringing together mountains and minerals, they established a symbolical possession of these physical entities. The value of their findings was not so much in geological and logistical quality, but in the very fact that this mode of the knowledge production worked out well and suited the expectations of the central elites. Their reports constructed a bold and bright vision that precious minerals sat out there faithfully waiting for the arrival of Russians.

Attempts at mineral mapping became especially intensive on the frequent visits to Central Asia, whilst establishing diplomatic contacts with the mighty Mongolian khans. Such trips presented an ideal opportunity to gain access to knowledge about the fabulous ore riches, though not from first hands. Asians were shrewd enough to keep valuable knowledge away from the curious strangers; it was deliberately withheld from them. Hungry for any snippet of resource data of the adjacent lands, Russians mostly relied upon the Mongolian sources.

The drawings of Siberia and Central Asia mirrored this blend of real and imaginary resource geographies. Despite the tendency to under-represent the mountains that was discussed earlier, the maps also registered the rise of Russians' keen interest in their mineral content. Though inaccurate by European standards, Semen Remezov's depictions displayed hills with presumed abundance of alabaster, copper, iron, lead, salt, sal ammoniac, tin, etc.[128] Although the material concern with mountains was not widely reflected on maps, the lack of representations was not indicative of the eager interest in this landscape. Remezov labeled ore locations beyond the tsar's control with the notes "sal ammoniac is mined" ("*topitsta sera"*) and "lead is mined" ("*svinets plaviat*").[129] Resources would often become the foremost feature on such depictions, and this fact points to the ongoing shift in spatial representations and the increasing

[128] "[...] the Tustebi mountain, in our language it means Solianaia gora, salt is mined there"; "The Ulutova mountain, in our language it means Great mountain, there is tin there". *Kniga Bolshomu Chertezhu*, 91, 168.
[129] *Chertezhnaia Kniga Sibiri*, I, List 20.

utilitarian focus on the highlands. It is evident that mountains took now a separate value. Muscovite imagination successfully transformed them from hostile non-places into the sites of intensive spatial performance.

At this stage of colonization, central power had to unwillingly trust local servicemen with the knowledge production. The process of generating and augmenting knowledge was chaotic and confusing, leaving central rulers no chance to verify it. It is evident that they reluctantly depended on the voevodas' loyalty, and not on the European knowledge and technologies, whereas the regional power brokers relied upon their mostly ignorant servants' mobility, the native geographies and local knowledge. The gaining of reliable data from the distant agents was one of the most urgent needs on the governmental agenda. The inability either to control the venues of knowledge making or to verify it made central rulers' grip on Siberia fairly vulnerable in terms of its governing.

2.3. A Vision of a Golden Mountain

Iron, lead, tin, and other metals ensured the Russian monarchy's wealth, but they could not sate the deep-seated desire for precious metals. For several centuries, the Spanish crown had been exploiting the New World; silver mining was in full blossom in Europe. Alas, precious metals were rare guests in Muscovy that lacked a single goldfield of its own.[130] Although the tsarist court had the Gold, Silver, and Diamond chambers, the craftsmen smelted and processed imported metals.[131] All that Muscovites could do was to collect inaccurate hearsay about potential deposits, and patiently expect them to become true sometime in the bright future.[132] These hopes were evident on maps, too: Remezov provided the Rocky Belt with a note *silver ore*, but it remained a decorative detail.[133]

Reports about a mountain full of precious metals arrived from various frontier locations. Brief contacts with Asian elites provided snippets of information similar to an Oriental fairy tale. One of the East Mongolian ruling dynasties was literally called the Golden Khans (*Altyn-Khan).*[134] Rumor circulated that the mountains in the Chinese

[130] Aristov, *Promyshlennost' drevnei Rusi,* 127-128.
[131] Troitskii, *Slovar' moskovskikh masterov zolotogo, serebrenogo i almaznogo dela.*
[132] *DAI*, IV, no. 63; Witsen, *Puteshestvie v Moskoviui,* 109.
[133] *The Atlas of Siberia*, no. 23.
[134] Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartayen,* pt. 2, 641-43; Baddeley, I, 189.

realm contained large amounts of silver.[135] Further accounts sounded more fantastic. An interpreter repeated verbatim about a mountain that was presumably located: "[…] above a small river, and out of that mountain silver ore crumbled down into water; whence they take it with sieves and they smelt ore in clay crucibles, but gold is brought to the Chinese capital on camels; and they go twenty days to get that gold".[136]

Early sources depicted the process of the important knowledge acquisition as an astonishingly smooth social talk with the locals. Inquired by the pioneer of the Russian colonization Erofei Khabarov, an East Siberian native provided an unexpectedly quick and clear answer about the desperately sought-after mountain:

> "Gold and silver come from [...] on the river there is a rock, and in the rock there is a golden mountain. And that gold ore is being broken up with the ironbars" (*I lomaiut tu rudu lomami zheleznymi*).[137]

Such accounts fed the image of a golden and silver mountain, but without providing any exact whereabouts. Russians preferred to stick to the less important details of the surrounding environment, rivers and rocks that would presumably facilitate the search operations. Apparently, they were mostly focused on ensuring that this mountain existed somewhere and identifying the exact authority it was under. In the mid-1680s, Spafarii, the unlucky ambassador to the Chinese emperor, reported about a mountain crammed with pure gold located under the command of the highest Mongolian Buddhist priest *Gutugtu*.[138] Naively trusting the unverified account, Remezov marked a place near a mountain range *Kamen* with a comment: "Kututoloma melts gold" (*Kututoloma plavat zeloto*).[139] (Figire 5)

Driven to procure access to new areas and resources, the expansionist realm seriously considered how many servicemen were to be dispatched for a conquest of Dauria, a region in Far East. The goal was not only to bring the natives under the tsar's hand, but, foremost, to conquer nearby highlands that were apparently filled with gold and silver.[140] The courageous vision of breaking up precious metals with the plain iron bars stuck halfway between a dream and an unrealistic plan. Apart from the distance, other obstacles blocked access to the fabulous Asian riches.[141]

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[135] *RKO*, I, no. 54, 122-24.
[136] Baddeley, I, 239.
[137] *ZRP*, 386.
[138] Spafarii, *Puteshestvie cherez Sibir*, 130.
[139] *The Atlas of Siberia*, n. 146; *Chertezhnaia Kniga Sibiri*, I, List 21.
[140] *RKO*, I, 199.
[141] "For the sake of protection, the ruler has 20 000 armed soldiers", *RKO*, I, nos. 54, 123.

In terms of gaining access to precious metals, the accurate whereabouts of the golden mountain did not matter. Gold was the target, whereas the exact landscape type, be it mountains or rivers, was irrelevant sometimes. Private seekers' major task was to find and take control of it. Throughout the century, Russians discovered "the golden mountains" of their own in the ancient graves (*bugry*). Courageous diggers (*bugrovshchiki*) energetically dug up thousands of the graves for the sake of gold and silver items left there by the earlier and less pragmatic inhabitants of Siberia.[142] Despite the natives' attempts to protect the sites considered their ancestors' tombs, Russians, thirsty for gold, continued breaking up the burial mounds. Gradually, they emptied and evened all man-made "golden mountains", and melted down precious items.[143]

Early modern mapping intimately tied the precious metals deposits to Asian highlands. The golden mountain located beyond the tsardom formed one of the discursive dominants of Muscovite resource geographies. Although nobody had a chance to see it in person, this fantastic vision would stick in the Russian mind for the coming centuries. Asia was not the only home to mountains with precious minerals. The translations from the foreign sources reported about the mountains in Germany that presumably contained pure gold.[144] Although closer to the tsardom geographically, these sites failed to attract Muscovites' attention, as they were on the massive work on colonizing Siberia and beyond.

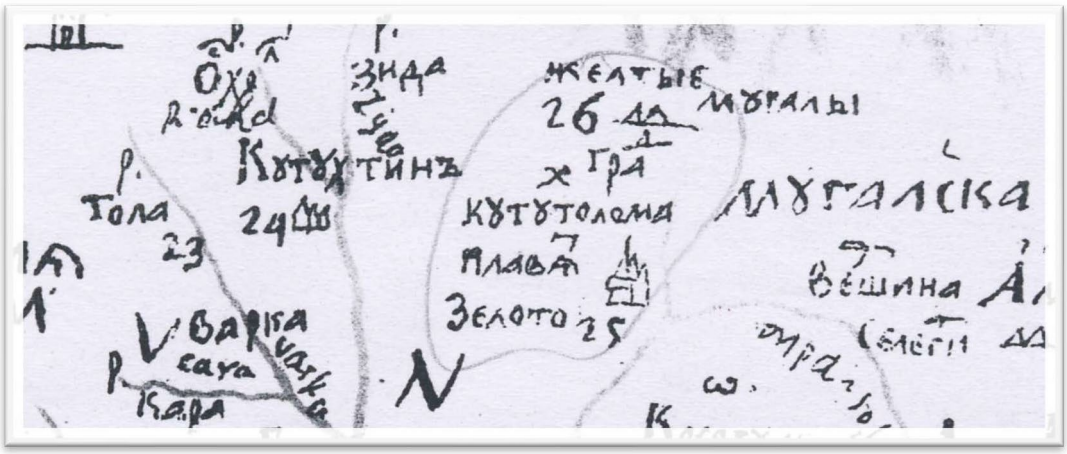

Figure 5. "Kututoloma melts gold" on Remezov's map "Chertezh vsekh Sibirskikh gradov."'.

[142] Slovtsov, *Istoricheskoe obozrenie Sibiri,* 259-260.
[143] Witsen, *Noord en Oost Tartayen,* plates 62-65; Kondakov, Tolstoi, *Russkie drevnosti v pamiatnikakh isskustva,* III,33-68*;* Rudenko, *Sibirskaia kollektsiia Petra I.*
[144] "Sirech opisaniia sego sveta zemel' i gosudarstv velikikh", 44-45.

2.4. Capturing Early Resource Modernities

What came to be known as the Berg Discourse first took shape throughout the seventeenth century, when a distinct shift, in other words, a series of breaks took place in Russian thinking about space. Placing mointains and minerals at the center of vision brings to light the differences in the spatial relationships that would have largely remained invisible. Several things follow from this. The exposure to the never seen landscape prompted changes and introduced a new era to the Muscovite geographical imagination. The spatial shifts transformed the mountain terrains into the areas of state concerns. The force of the shifts was connected to a turn to various practices and modes of representations.

Among many paths to modernity that Russian elites took, this one seems to be of a particular importance. It is evident that a sense of modernity can be captured in the midst of emerging power over the resource peripheries. This distinct niche in colonial policies empowered Muscovite rulers to deepen their conceptual and physical grip on Siberia. In the course of the century, Russians were quickly advancing with mineral mapping that became of central concern to the government.

The vigorous implementation of mapping signaled emerging facets of certain modernities. What was distinctively modern about mineral mapping? It implied different forms and practices of the spatial knowledge constructing that can be identified as modern, for they caused radical transformation of space in the imagination.[145] In the minds of the Muscovite and Siberian officials, it offered an advanced method of the orientation and construction of the colonies. Through it, they gained the capacity to command and produce space that lay far beyond their outreach. One more dimension of modernity helped towards setting up the trans-regional networks that united the dispersed Siberian forts, the native settlements, the central agencies, and particular places across West Europe. These loose groups worked together, albeit not effectively, on making a different sense of space.

The rise of the Berg Discourse brought into being hybrid forms of power relations, material practices and spatial knowledge. The period saw the emergence of the framework "spatial power – mountains – minerals". Primarily, this was generated in a variety of the bizarre settings by informal social networks rather than in strictly

[145] Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities", 1-29; Nash, "Historical Geographies of Modernity", 17; Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity,* 12.

disciplinary locations that would arrive in the Enlightenment age. These complex and shifting processes did not operate in isolation, as various power groups produced complex versions of mineral knowledge. Their net product constituted of the flows of instructions and inquiries from the center to the Siberian servants and their reports crammed with half-truths and hearsay.

On one hand, the intensive inquiries and occasional contacts with the native Siberian groups and the Asian ruling elites enabled the tsardom to amass a fair amount of specific data about mineral wealth. On the other hand, its sketchy and unsystematic nature reveals the extent of Russian resource hunger, for this data contained a fair amount of purely imaginary geographies, in other words, a mixed collection of uncertain stories. Apparently, this fact disturbed neither those who generated the data nor those who consumed it in Moscow. The very materiality of this kind of knowledge overshadowed the uncertainties of far distances, high expenses of the expeditions, low chances of discovering ore, etc. Although far from a coherent body of knowledge, it was slowly assembling, growing and developing into something tangible that would soon define colonial policies in Siberia and beyond. This movement was under way and would last into the imperial period.

Apparently, Muscovite elites and mineral modernity came together in a particular place and time. The presence of the early Berg Discourse manifested itself in the central and local governing agencies. A single institution had not consolidated control over resources yet, but governmental bodies intensively claimed it into the realms of their business. However, real control over resources and the capacity of producing knowledge belonged to the regional agents. This made the knowledge making process and its control by central rulers susceptible in terms of their spatial grip.

However, mineral mapping was not centered upon Siberia alone. Similar search was simultaneously under way in central and northern Rus.[146] Moreover, between 1628 and 1630, one of the earliest Muscovite geological expeditions mapped the territory under the command of the Circassian ruler Pshimakh in the North Caucasus.[147] Headed by two British experts, it discovered several oil wells and returned for fear of local threats. Only armed protection could ensure the safety and success of the mineral expeditions. Further on, access to resources was often an object of negotiations between

[146] *PSZ,* 1661, N. 296.
[147] Gamel', *Opisanie puteshestviia na Kavkaz*.

the tsar and the foreign crowns, e.g. the Georgian ruler.[148] Such occasions in the areas beyond the Russian control appeared only on a singular basis, whereas mapping of Siberia was done on more regular and productive terms.

The major mapping principles were established in the period, and they formed one of the top priorities on the colonization agenda. The mineral framework offered Muscovites a certain sense of spatial order and control. The extent of this framework confirms that the geographical boundary between the territories under Russian actual control and the areas beyond became quite blurred in terms of the resource concerns. This was something to be regarded a certain pattern that would become paradigmatic in the future. Whilst, Russian extended mapping to the east and south of Siberia and attained immediate access to some deposits, early colonizers were strictly constrained to a mere gathering of unverified resource data about the adjacent countries. Mineral concerns continued stimulating the further expansion, whereas Muscovy's appetite for resources increased along with its growing territorial ambitions.

The emerging Berg Discourse entailed a variety of the radically modern moments, which would serve as a point of departure in standardizing resource mapping in imperial Russia. The keen focus on the highlands and rigorous attempts at resource mapping in Siberia and beyond were among few elements that imperial policies would inherit and develop further. In the resource matters, the stage had been set for the wide arrival of European modernity. Here, the Muscovy Rus was especially sensitive to changing influences from Europe and open to adopting the advanced technologies.

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David Harvey, the scholar of historical geography of modernity, has acknowledged that it is often difficult to decide if the radical break occurs in the style of doing or representing things in different areas or whether shifts in such areas cluster in some crucially important places and times from whence the forces of modernity diffuse outward to engulf the rest of the world.[149] His observation is relevant to our case. The exposure to mountains and minerals introduced a new era of power relations for the Russian state. Obviously, the radical break took place both in the ways of representing space and in particular mountain terrains as well as in the minds of the officials and the concrete sites of Muscovy and Siberia.

[148] *Posolstvo Kniazia Myshetskogo v Kakhetiiu*, 150-51.
[149] Harvey, *Paris, the Capital of Modernity*, 1.

Historians have pointed out that early imperial Russia experienced a conceptual break with the pre-Petrine spatial paradigms.[150] Beyond any doubt, the arrival of imperial modernity would transform many areas and create new structures. However, the chapter has suggested that mineral mapping posed the most obvious break towards modernity that had occurred prior to the grand-scale reforms. The imperfect search for mineral treasures prepared the ground for the coming novelties. In many ways, as an unparalleled modernization practice, this trend indicated powerful discourses and a closer involvement with distant space and natural riches. For that reason, the notion of the cardinal change does not work out well in this case. Eventually, there was not much to break with, as the obvious break had already taken place in the past decades.

New experience and practices facilitated the transition of the tsardom to a modern period. Two key issues, emerging power over natural resources and the different modes of spatial knowledge production, pointed to modern dimensions that became apparent prior to the major changes of the imperial age. These enabled Muscovy to take serious steps towards modernity, even if it embraced it on its own terms. Keeping in mind that modernity cannot be reduced to the chronologically new notions, let us have a closer look on the changes brought into this area with the winds of the Petrine reforms.[151]

[150] Shaw, "Geographical practice and its significance in Peter the Great's Russia", 160-176; Sunderland, "Imperial Space: Territorial Thought", 33-35.
[151] Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity,* 3.

CHAPTER THREE
"MAY MINERAL LUCK ALWAYS BLOSSOM IN RUSSIA!"

"*Daby i v Rossiiskom gosudarstve podobno kedram Livanskim,*
Rudokopnoe bogatstvo schastiem vsegda protsvetalo"
(May mineral luck always blossom in the Russian state like the Lebanese cedars) [152]

Imperial modernity opened doors wide to administrative innovations, new practices and institutions. Further transformations continued changing Russians' spatial perception.[153] The advancement of the Berg Discourse can be understood now in terms of "more and better". The empire began rapidly moving in this direction; it exerted greater control over space, employed up-to-date European knowledge and technologies, recruited scores of foreigner experts, surveyed larger areas, established more metallurgical factories, etc.

The resource framework provides a different perspective on the early empire building, as it reveals mineral mapping at work in making imperial space. Access to resources empowered Russia to attain military strength and a status of great power. Strategically important for a wide array of economic and industrial activities, mapping remained at the core of many state policies and posed a significant source of income.[154]

This chapter charts the further evolvement of the Berg Discourse on its passage to imperial modernity. Obviously, the discourse sustained central power' ability to rule and dominate. By tracing sites and practices in which modernity was grounded, it briefly examines the events that forced the government to rethink the entire concept of mineral management. It argues that central elites were in a gradual and decisive process of consolidating control over mineral issues. This kind of control implied power to mobilize people and knowledge, natural environment and resources. We start with a general overview of the attempts to set up a central institution that would concentrate resource control; its dramatic changes during the century are examined.

Then, the focus turns to mineral mapping, which served as a series of linkages between the early modern and imperial period; its defining features are discerned. Who

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[152] Bogdanova, "Stikhi 18 veka o rudokopnom dele" (The Mining Verses, the 1730s), 231-46.
[153] Sunderland, *"*Imperial Space: Territorial Thought*"*; Dixon, *The Modernization of Russia*; Gnucheva, *Geograficheskii departament Akademii Nauk*; Grekov, *Ocherki po istorii russkikh geograficheskikh issledovanii;* Lebedev, *Geografiia v Rossii petrovskogo vremeni*; Val'skaia,*"*Obzor opytov raionorovaniia Rossii*"*, 139-201; Tagirova, "Mapping the Empire's Economic Regions", 125-135; Shaw, "Geographical practice and its significance in Peter the Great's Russia", 160-176.
[154] *PSZ,* 1735, N. 6841, art. 1; 1736, N. 7047; Liubomirov, *Ocherki po istorii metallurgii v Sibiri.*

did the mapping, for whom and how? It argues further that the ruling groups came close to controlling the mineral knowledge production by creating networks of the makers of such knowledge. These networks incorporated governmental officials, German naturalists, and the Russian disciples. Central elites were empowered to take away actual mineral control from the regional administrators. New networks and institutions of expertise signaled a modern level of the spatial knowledge production. Where did early experts' knowledge come from? What were the dominant practices of the knowledge production? In the concluding part, we will discuss how the Berg Discourse architects converted natural resources into a form of collective consciousness that would produce lasting implications.

3.1. Early Steps and Bitter Lessons

The urge of the government for creating an agency that would exclusively deal with the resource issues was fulfilled in 1700, when an institution "the Rudokopnyi prikaz" (also Prikaz rudnykh del, lit. the Ore-Digging Agency) was established in Moscow.[155] The move was supported by a decree that encouraged mineral mapping across the country.[156] On the whole, the early modern method was repeated: potential prospectors were to report their findings to the regional administrators, who would now redirect it to the newly established institution.

In fact, the Ore-Digging agency proved to be an experiment, a test version of an institution that was just emerging. Initially, it meant an extra desk at one of Muscovy's most important financial bodies, the Treasury Agency (Prikaz Bolshie Kazny). Its staff originally consisted of two officials, and it is hard to say whether they had been directly involved with the mineral issues before and what kind of duties they had. Obviously, their competence was not very effective, as the further events confirmed.

The age of the Ore-Digging agency proved unexpectedly short; a Senate decree put the end to it in 1711.[157] However, four years later, it was restored to life and moved from Moscow to the capital St. Petersburg.[158] Imperial administrators were not concerned about the professional qualities of the staff: after the restoration, no less than Ivan Vasilievich, Tsarevich Kasimoviskii, was appointed as its head. An institution

[155] *PSZ,* 1700, N. 1812.
[156] *PSZ,* 1700, N. 1815.
[157] *PSZ,* 1711, N. 2370.
[158] *PSZ,* 1711, N. 2908, N. 2922.

could emerge with a mighty stroke of a pen, but it would take years to create the professional networks.

In absence of a central body, the government continued trusting the regional rulers with geological mapping. The augmenting of resource knowledge was one of the top priorities on the state agenda, and a foremost duty of the regional governors. When the further expansion added new areas to Russian control, mineral mapping was an integral part of the governmental policies applied to these territories.

At the turn of the century, the first quasi-Russian gold and silver reserves were discovered on the edge of southeastern Siberia.[159] However, for war purposes, the government needed more sources of precious metals, and the search for gold led Petrine Russia to Central Asia. Collecting uncertain accounts about ore deposits worked out well for the seventeenth century Muscovite rulers. But what happened when the government used regional reports as a trustworthy guide in an attempt to gain real control on the ground? Mineral fairytales would expectantly fail.

Two well-known episodes mark an important watershed in the Russian spatial history.[160] Their fiasco introduced new concerns and served as a reason for a decisive break from the pre-modern ways of gathering mineral knowledge. In the early 1710s, the Tobolsk Governor Matvei Gagarin, a half-tsar of Siberia, reported several stories about plentiful golden sand in the bed of the upper Amy-Daria River in Khivan khanate and precious metals around the town of Erkent in Eastern Turkestan (modern Xinjian) that was presumably located in the upper Irtysh in West Mongolia.[161]

It is evident that the voevoda's word was more reliable to the tsar Peter than the European experts' opinion. Unable to verify the credibility of Gagarin's reports, the ambitious government dispatched two expeditions to Central Asia. A high-risk military operation launched in 1714, when Colonel Ivan Bukhgolts headed to the upper Irtysh River. The second detachment of Guard Captain Alexandr Bekovich-Cherkaskii headed off to Khiva in 1717. The geographically ignorant central elites greatly underestimated the difficulties of the terrain and the full exhausting length between Khiva and West

[159] *PSZ,* 1696, N. 1561; Shcheglov, *Khronologicheskii perechen',* 86, 98, 102; Kuzin, *Istoriia otkrytii rudnykh mestorozhdenii,* 50-51.
[160] *Opisanie Kaspiiskogo moria i chenennykh na nem rossiiskikh zavoevaniaikh*, 4-28; *PSI*, nos. 11, 22, 28, 40, 43, 53; Miller, "Izvestiia o pesoshnom zolote v Bukharii"; Danilevskii, *Russkoie zoloto. Istoriia otkrytiia i dobychi do serediny 19 veka,* 21-29; Kniazhetskaia, "Istoriia odnoi oshibki"; LeDonne, *The Grand Strategy of the Russian Empire*, 42-44.
[161] *PSZ,* 1714, N. 2811; 1719, N. 3284.

Mongolia. Guided by imaginary geographies rather than by reliable scientific knowledge and accurate maps, both expeditions ended in disaster. Although Bukhgolts established military presence along the Irtysh River, he had to withdraw in 1717, as Russians faced dramatic losses of people and were too exhausted to resist Zunghars. Mayor Likharev's repeated expedition in the same destination for the similar purposes failed in the same way two years later.[162] All that remained from the Khivan expedition was the colloquial saying, "perish like Bekovich" (*propast' kak Bekovich*). Deceived and divided by the khan, his detachment was tragically massacred.

These two episodes in the Russian energetic and desperate search for precious metals in Central Asia marked the end to the pre-Petrine ways of the producing the mineral knowledge. To attain a modern level, it required time and several important decisions that would eventually empower the government to dismiss the regional administrators as ultimate creators and arbiters of the crucially important knowledge.

3.2. "Search, Dig, Melt, Mine!"

Apparently, the architects of imperial modernity believed in power of the state institutions more than in people. The government kept a close eye on the European mining models, and as a result, a new agency, the Berg-Kollegium (the Russified form Berg-Kollegiia, the Mining College) appeared in 1717 in St. Petersburg with General Brius as its president.[163] This structural analog of the Saxon institutions was part of the administrative innovations imported personally by the monarch. Its emergence in power structures exemplifies a special feature of imperial modernity. That happened when old things were renamed and appeared as new, as Viktor Zhivov has observed in his seminal study.[164] The Berg-College posed a product of the Ore Agency's makeover into a new model that would resemble the German or Swedish analog at least by its name. Predictably, in the course of the administrative reforms, the new institution would replace the Ore-Digging Agency.

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[162] *PSI*, II, no. 53.
[163] *PSZ,* 1717, N. 3133; *PSZ,* 1718, N. 3255; Tatishchev, Leksikon, 186-187; Deriabin, *Istoricheskoe opisanie gornykh del,* 14-22, 148-49; Loranskii, *Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk;* Pavlenklo, *Razvitie metallurgicheskoi promyshlennosti*, 95-101; 102-63; Amburger, *Geschichte der Behördenorganization*, 232-43.
[164] Zhivov, *"*Istoriia poniatii*"*, 15.

In January of 1719, and in absence of an alternative, the government confirmed its adherence to the pre-Petrine method in a set of the instructions designed for the regional administrators. Along with supervising local metallurgical factories and facilitating mineral mapping, the governors had to stay in regular communication with the Berg- and Manufacture College.[165]

A radical revision of the state policies concerning the mineral matters took place in December of 1719, when the government turned the tables around by reversing the previous decree. Through the so-called Mineral-Privilege (*Berg-Privillegiia*), the ruling elites sent three important messages to all subjects of the Russian crown.[166] First, governors were resolutely moved away from supervising the mapping and mining. It is evident that the dismissal of the regional administrators posed one of the chief lessons that the government drew from its Central Asian fiasco. In the coming decades, they would be occasionally assigned with collecting mineral information, but their time of spatial mastership was now over.[167] Second, the Berg-College was brought into the limelight as the top resource agency. Its branches were set up in Moscow and Kazan'. Third, regarded as the first resource law of Russia, the Mineral-Privilege encouraged all social groups to search, dig, melt, and mine, in other words, to develop the resource exploitation across the country.[168]

How was the high mineral desire communicated downwards? The messages were announced at public venues and markets across the country and brought to the knowledge of potential prospectors. In the multiethnic empire, the decree was translated into non-Russian languages: Tatar, Bashkir, and German.[169] Foreign mining companies were warmly welcomed.[170] The government desperately needed engagement and cooperation of every subject of the tsar and beyond, and lured ore seekers by promising great privileges. A range of extreme measures, including capital punishment, awaited those who intentionally hid the whereabouts of mineral deposits or resisted the mining works.[171] Those, suspected of concealing ore deposits, were labeled as "enemies of everybody's good" (*vragi obshchenarodnoi polzy*).[172]

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[165] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3294, art. 38.
[166] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3464.
[167] This rule saw an exception in mapping of Siberia in 1727 and empirewide in 1736. *PSZ*, 1727, N. 5163, art. 4-5; 1736, N. 7086.
[168] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3464; 1722, N. 3974.
[169] Rozhkov, "Deiatelnost' Tatishcheva", 31.
[170] *PSZ,* 1720, N. 3621, 3701.
[171] Ukaz Berg-Kollegii ot 10 dekabria 1721 g. *Reglament Berg-Kollegii*, no page #.
[172] *PSZ,* 1739, N. 7766, art. 20.

However, the decree only reflected the current trends, which shaped the ruling groups' decisions. For decades, ordinary people had searched for natural resources without any encouragement from above. The geography of potential mineral deposits was both astonishing and puzzling. What was striking was people's blind faith in the power of geological mapping. Rumor had it that silver could be found in central Russia. It was sincerely believed that, if the land was seriously scratched and searched, gold and silver could be discovered in the Russian heartland, either in the Kurskaia province or in the Vologodskaia subprovince. The areas around the newly established St. Petersburg were believed to contain precious pearls.[173] In truth, the minerals were out in the newly conquered areas.

A massive engagement in geological activities of almost all imperial groups eventually reached epic proportions in the early decades. A closer examination of these resource driven social movements presents a much more complex picture. A range of contrasting groups was involved: mining experts, private developers, mapmakers, miners as well as religious dissidents (Old Believers) and lower groups (peasants). The latter were particularly indispensable to the successful completion of the geological mapping, since they, including children, were more familiar with exact whereabouts of local riches. In the peripheries, the role of the native agency was as important as before.[174] Old mines exploited by the pre-Russian inhabitants of Siberia posed one of the most reliable ways to trace mineral reserves. In this way, the Old Believers discovered the private Kolyvanskie copper mines on the edge of southern Siberia.[175]

A need to cooperate with lower groups entailed unpredictable implications, however. In a hope of escape, arrested criminals made false statements about whereabouts of mineral deposits. Blinded by material concerns, authorities would accept these statements as true. A small-scale expedition comprising a criminal, a mining expert, and soldiers traveled to the indicated area to examine the accuracy of the statements, which almost in all cases proved illusory.[176]

For a while, unreliable groups, driven by own interests and motives, carried out mineral making. All of them attempted to gain what little advantage they could out of the grand-scale resource fever that “hit” the entire country. Obviously, their pro-active

[173] *PSZ,* 1714, N. 2864; 1716, N. 2864; 1728, N. 5278.
[174] *PSI,* I, nos. 56 (V, VI, VII, XV); 74.
[175] Slovtsov, *Istorisheskoe obozrenie Sibiri,* 65-69.
[176] *PSI,* II, 103*; PSZ,* 1697, N. 1594, art. 15, 1723, N. 4367.

engagement proved unproductive for the central elites' ambitious plans, since the government's spatial power too obviously depended on untrustworthy groups and sources. The ruling groups desired as much accurate data as possible on the mineral wealth of the country. In a further effort to secure it, the government sought for the more sophisticated methods of creating the credible knowledge. Time was due for the arrival of the learned and reliable others, professional networks and individuals, capable of generating modern and accurate mineral data about the empire.

3.3. The Making of the Professional Networks

In 1719, a young naturalist Daniel Gottlieb Messerschmidt arrived in St. Petersburg. Like many other foreigners, this talented German scientist sought his fortune in Russia. The tsar Peter recruited Messerschmidt for conducting scientific studies in Siberia, in other words, to map this hardly known and promising colony. The government desperately needed the engagement of European scholars in its attempts to rationalize the exploitation of Siberia's natural resources. A lonely journey through an unfriendly terrain ruined his health. Further, his inability to deal with the officials in St. Petersburg and regional administration ruined his reputation and further academic career. Although his studies and geological findings were not used for the immediate mining, this voyage between 1720 and 1727 can be regarded as a prelude to the grand-scale expeditions of the coming decades.[177] In a sense, D.G. Messerschmidt counts as one of the first professional makers of spatial and resource knowledge in Russia.

The establishment of the Imperial Academy of Sciences in 1725 facilitated the emergence of the professional communities. The state sponsored trips known as the Great Northern Expeditions formed a large mapping project performed by the European Enlightenment naturalists and the Russian disciples.[178] The highly educated travelers still depended on local authorities' will and favor, albeit to a lesser extent than Messerschmidt did.

The second quarter of the century saw a transition of the knowledge production from the regional agents to the clusters of the newly recruited professional groups. The members of the Academy of Sciences constituted their bulk. Apparently, men of science took control over the matters of mineral knowledge. Traveling scholars had

[177] Messerschmidt, *Forschungsreise durch Sibirien*; Novlianskaia, *Daniil Gotlib Messershmidt i ego raboty po issledovaniiu Sibiri*.
[178] Golder, *Russian Expansion of the Pacific*.

unlimited power in the knowledge making about the imperial space. However, a suggestion that modernity radically replaced ill-educated Siberian officials by enlightened German and Russian naturalists would simplify complex changes.

Narrow groups produced spatial knowledge and its agents represented various power institutions and empire-building areas. Human landscape of the Berg Discourse makers was as diverse as before: Russians and Europeans, men of noble rank and newcomers of humble origin. Far from a coherent group, they should be rather presented as the clusters of networks of German (Gmelin, Müller, Pallas, Fischer, Güldenstadt, the younger Gmelin, etc.) and Russian naturalists (Krasheninnikov, Lomonosov, Rychkov, Lepekhin, Ozeretskovskii, Sevriugin, etc.), imperial officials and mining experts (de Gennin, Tatishchev, Schlözer, Ivan German, etc.). Sometimes, the architects of the Berg Discourse had a dual identity as civil servants and naturalists: Piotr Rychkov, the head of the Ekaterinburg mining agency and the Academy member; Iohann Renovants, one of the top officials at the Kolyvanskie silver mining factories, the Academy correspondent, and the member of the Free Economical Society. These and others were entrusted with taking important decisions; they created and maintained trans-regional networks, lobbied interests, exchanged knowledge, etc.

One would reasonably expect from the Petrine period a massive campaign on forming "the emperor's mining men", as with other professional networks. However, there was no coherence in the way the regional institutions of expertise were set up. Dispersed mining schools appeared in the Siberian factories.[179] Several experts were sent abroad to learn first-hand. Training of the mining elites with a definite mission in mind began only in the 1770s with the establishment of the Mineral and Mining School (*Gornoe uchilishche*).[180]

Now that the government had credible knowledge makers at its side and the discourse was constructed by natural science, an intense state program of systematic mapping was at work in producing and categorizing the imperial space. A range of the large and small expeditions explored South and North Russia, the newly established Orenburg province, Siberia, and the Caucasus.[181]

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[179] Nechaev, *Gornozavodskie shkoly Urala;* Povarennykh, "Nachalo spetsial'nogo gornogo obrazovaniia v Rossii", 151-66.
[180] *PSZ,* 1773, N. 14048; 1834, N. 6847, 6848, 7298; Loranskii, *Istoricheskii ocherk Gornogo instituta.*
[181] Gmelin, *Expedition ins unbekannte Sibirien*; Tatishchev, *Leksikon Rossiiskoi; Polnoe sobranie uchionykh puteshestvii po Rossii,* I – VII*;* Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki;* Rychkov, *Topografiia Orenburgskaia*; Laxmann, *Sibirische Briefe*; Pallas, *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen*

The making of knowledge, measurement and surveillance of the imperial terrains became one of central state enterprises. The professionals' involvement provided for a modern orientation to spatial knowledge. The gap between the ill-defined orders to the Siberian servants and the detailed instructions to the members of the Academic Expeditions vigorously indicated the new stage of mineral mapping.[182] German naturalists brought stability and standardization to the knowledge production. Mining experts and academics surveyed, catalogued and managed mineral riches; credible knowledge was generated according to the Enlightenment standards. Geographical exploration extended this kind of data. The scope of the material practices substantially increased. Out of collecting rumors and randomly working through unfriendly rocks in search of valuable substance, mineral mapping transformed into an extensive range of the geological surveys based on the European technologies.

It is obvious that along with disciplining the barely known peripheries, the explorers' systematic descriptions worked towards the creation of the more complex systems of mapping. Mineral knowledge production moved now through complex circulatory networks, as it became an important component of a broader project that systematized and rationalized the knowledge of space. Mineral mapping formed a red thread running through the eighteenth-century exploration. In other words, a primary impulse behind the geographical efforts was not "love of knowledge", but strong economic concern.[183] Armed with the advanced technologies, naturalists and mining experts mapped the peripheries exclusively through the mineral framework.

3.4. Central Elites on the Mineral March

The cumulative effect of governmental policies proved productive quite soon. Central mobilization of natural resources increased, whereas the mining was evolving into a state in the state.[184] However, the advancement of the agency that embodied imperial power over mineral wealth entailed several unexpected curves. Unlike other institutions, this administrative body saw a series of dramatic changes over the course of the century: it was resolved and restored, renamed several times, merged with other

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des Russischen Reichs; Gildenstedt, *Puteshestvie po Kavkazu*; Ozeretskovskii, *Puteshestvie po ozioram Ladozhskomu i Onezhskomu;* Grekov, *Ocherki iz istorii russkikh issledovanii, etc.*

[182] *PSZ,* 1733, N. 6351, art. 15-16, 22-23.

[183] Driver, *Geography Militant*, pt. "Geographical Knowledge, Exploration and Empire".

[184] *PSZ,* 1734, 6559, art. 21; Got'e, *Istoriia upravleniia v Rossii,* I, 373.

institutions, moved back and forth between St. Petersburg and Moscow.[185] The Berg-College supervised and coordinated all state and private mining enterprises; charged taxes, collected mining data, etc. From the very beginning, it was not a single power branch that controlled natural resources. The Commerce-College, the Manufacture-College, the Admiralty, etc. shared tight control over it.[186] A subject of the changes, it was neither an important decision maker nor did it bring substantial profits.[187]

Obviously, the desire to improve the Berg-College was the driving factor for the changes. There were also other impulses behind the wish of the central administrators to make it better. In the course of empire building, the resource management took on different forms: control was either concentrated by one or several central agencies or given away to the regional institutions. Whatever model was employed currently, the other one seemed more successful, so that the government intuitively sought for the most effective one by moving the management between two sides. Sometimes, the adherence to the certain model depended on the ruler's personal preference: renamed as the General-Berg-Direktorium, the ex-Berg-College was entrusted with entire control over all mining matters of the country for a few years. However, the arrival of a new sovereign returned things to the old path.[188]

The 1770-1780s administrative reforms restructured the management anew. Once again, the Berg-College was habitually revoked and replaced by a more complicated model. The newly established State Expedition for the Mineral and Mining (*gornaia ekspeditsiia*) overtook the functions, whereas its regional subsidiaries at the State Chambers (*kazennye palaty*) were assigned to supervise the mineral and mining locally.[189] However, as soon as one ruler succeeded the other, this style of management appeared ineffective, and, after the short oblivion, the Berg-College re-emerged in power orbit by the close of the century.[190]

Despite the dramatic transformations, the Berg-College should not be yet considered a failed ministry for mineral resources. Under various names and in different periods, this test version revealed the strengths and weaknesses of different conceptions of the mineral management. The evolvement of the agency is indicative of a more

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[185] Deriabin, *Istoricheskoe opisanie gornykh del,* 149-154; *PSZ,* 1730, N. 5583, 1731, N. 5860; 1733, N. 6411; 1760, N. 11907.
[186] Tatishchev, *"*Leksikon*"*, 186-187; Tatishchev, *Zapiski, pis'ma,* n. 136.
[187] Miliukov, *Gosudarstvennoe khoziastvo*, 115.
[188] *PSZ,* 1736, N. 7047, 7062; 1742, N. 8543.
[189] *PSZ,* 1781, N.15120; 1783, N.15740,
[190] *PSZ,* 1796, N.17567, 17676, 17678; 1797, N. 17711.

general problem. However, its unlucky destiny was finally decided in the early 1800s.[191] After a century of the experimenting, the government eventually solved the immense challenge in the course of the administrative reforms, when the Ministry of Finances consolidated control over all resource issues across the empire. The Berg-College was reborn as the Mineral and Mining (*Gornyi*) Department at the imperial powerhouse, and this completed another full circle of Russian resource history. Once an extra desk at the Muscovite financial body "Prikaz Bolshoi Kazny", the Ore-Digging Agency marked the beginning of a long train of events that culminated in the establishment of one of the largest departments at the mighty ministry.[192]

Resource mapping enjoyed the complete support of the government. Meanwhile, it resolutely seized the initiative in the mineral exploration of the vast Russian territories; a massive mapping campaign packed the country in the mid-decades of the century. However, none of the follow-up decrees aimed at encouraging mineral mapping that repeated the 1719 Mineral-Privilege almost verbatim should serve as the point of departure.[193] Rather, they manifested certain directions and trends within power relations.

Like the Soviet successors, the ruling ones did not expect mercy from the natural environment; on the contrary, they put maximal efforts into discovering hidden deposits. Search for resources would sometimes take on the forms of sporadic requirements to find out: "where are prominent and high mountain ranges, show their locations, and [...] how far they stretch."[194] Some experts pointed to that chances to discover the deposits with high quality minerals did not depend on "the massive and painstaking efforts at breaking up the rocky ranges" (*ne usilennym razlamyvaniem kamennykh khrebtov*), but mostly on sheer accident.[195] However, driven by belief that the enquiries from above would facilitate regional mapping, the central elites launched grand-scale resource projects across the newly conquered areas. Earlier, it was mentioned that the re-establishment of the resource agency was regularly supported by an extra decree that encouraged geological search. One more effort at a total mapping of the mountain terrains was undertaken after the General-Berg-Direktorium replaced

[191] *PSZ,* 1807, N. 22632.
[192] *PSZ,* 1811, N. 24688, Ch. 5.
[193] *PSZ,* 1727, N. 5163; 1735, N. 6841, art. 1; 1739, N. 7766; 1761, N. 11292; 1782, N. 15447, art. 2.
[194] Ukaz Pravitel'stvuiushchego Senata vo vse gubernii. *Topograficheskie izvestiia,* I, art. 20*; PSI, pt. 1, N. 56, no. I.*
[195] Ozeretskovskii, *Puteshestvie po ozioram Ladozhskomu i Onezhskomu,* 171.

the Berg-College in 1736.[196] Dispatched in all directions, this topographical survey posed a forerunner to the Soviet series "Mineral Seeker's Library" that would link natural science with popular local knowledge.[197] Apparently, good intentions from above were not always treated too seriously on the local level; otherwise, the entire country would have turned into a huge metallurgical factory within a few years.

Imperial geographies firmly connected mountain spaces with minerals, and this discursive link remained a key point in the Russian relationships to space.[198] However, the traditional historical narrative under-represents material interests embedded into the Russian expansion. Although it refocuses the attention from economic benefits to the speed of the territorial growth, it seems that material concerns were far more often at the heart of the expansionist agenda. Inherited from the pre-Petrine period, a deeply seated urge to map the adjacent countries kept the elites focused on Asia's natural resources.[199]

By expanding the spatial control, the central government launched a mineral-mapping project beyond the state borders. The frontier Caucasian range posed an attractive resource target due to various metals, oilfields, and mineral springs that soon would be turned into the first imperial spa. Iohann Güldenstadt, the member of the Academic expedition, traveled across the North and South Caucasus in the early 1770s.[200] Perhaps, his voyage was the second geological exploration organized by the Russian state in the region since the late 1620s, when two British miners hired by the Muscovite tsar tapped local oilfields.[201] Güldenstadt explored the South Caucasian territories under the command of the Georgian ruler, whose modest plants mined iron and copper. Although the region had had an extensive mining history in the past, there were not many actual enterprises there.

The resource exploiting perspectives in the North Caucasus were blurrier. Güldenstadt painstakingly mapped mineral reserves along the Terek River and in other places, but something else was on the agenda.[202] The expert stated that before

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[196] *PSZ,* 1736, N. 7086.
[197] "Biblioteka iskatel'a poleznykh iskopaemykh" was a popular series published in the 1960-1970s. one of its typical titles: Volfson, Lukin, *Chto takoe rudnye mestorozhdeniia, gde i kak ikh iskat'.*
[198] Lomonosov, *"*Pervykh osnovanii metallurgii*"*, 285; *PSI,* I, nos. 56-XIII*;* Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki,* pt. 4 *'O metallakh i mineralakh kamchatskikh',* 220.
[199] *PSI,* I, N. 40*; PSZ,* 1734, N. 6571; LeDonne, *The Grand Strategy,* 75.
[200] Gildenshtedt, *Puteshestvie po Kavkazu v 1770 i 1773 godu*, 210-222.
[201] Gamel', *Opisanie puteshestviia na Kavkaz*.
[202] "Karta rukopisnaia techeniia reki Tereka s podrobnym ukazaniem mestonakhozhdeniia poleznykh iskopaemykh akademika Gildenshtedta"; Goldenberg, "Karty Severnogo Kavkaza" (1768-1772)".

establishing a mining endeavor in the Caucasus Russia should take preliminary measures of their effective protection against hostile mountain people. For that purpose, he suggested building up several strategic forts that would protect Russian miners. His idea only echoed Alexandr Bekovich's earlier plan to set up a fortress for mineral purposes (*rudnaia krepost*) on the other shore of the Caspian Sea.[203]

The issue of safety indicated the primary difference between geological mapping in Siberia and the Caucasus. In the former, sporadic efforts of the regional servicemen and the help of the native agency launched the mapping in the previous century. The Russian records registered no obvious resistance by indigenous people there. By the late century, central elites had more advanced networks and tools at their disposal, but the Caucasus posed a much more challenging setting, for hostile and militant locals threatened mapping attempts, as the tragic death of Güldenstadt's colleague, the German scholar Samuel Gmelin, showed.

Various claims to imperial superiority can be read in the Russian mineral fever. Inherited from the pre-Petrine past, the keen concern with resources of the adjacent lands assumed now a form of "a mineral mission", or the elites' collective consciousness that justified the further conquest and deepened a sense of imperial purpose. This way of imagining the adjacent space manifests itself in a statement made in 1734 by Ivan Kirilov, the Senate Senior Secretary. In an eloquent style, he explained Russian mineral mapping in the neighboring lands as a means to make up for the inability of the backward locals, who fail to properly care for natural treasures.[204] The sense of the special mission empowered the ruling elites to view natural resources beyond their command as inherently theirs, whereas the mapping offered a convenient tool to further claims for the adjacent countries.[205]

The blend of concerns and mixed feelings regarding the minerals that lay undisturbed and wasted in the Asian realm points to the limitations of Russia's imperial reach. Natural resources often formed a point of discussion with the local rulers.[206] Dispatched with the diplomatic mission to induce the Zunghar Khan (Kontaisha in the Russian transcription) into submission, Captain Ivan Unkovskii anxiously tackled the soil for the geological mapping. Unkovskii promised: "Once good gold or silver is

[203] *PSZ,* 1714, N. 2815.
[204] *PSZ,* 1734, N. 6571, art. 10.
[205] Baberowski, "Auf der Suche nach Eindeitigkeit: Kolonialismus und zivilisatirische Mission", 482-504; Münkler, *Imperien,* 100, 132, 150.
[206] *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia*, I, n. 90.

discovered, you will receive great wealth, and to you, Kontaisha, a part will be given".[207] While his promise sounds rather unrealistic, the serviceman did not err in predicting the wealth that the extracting of minerals entailed.

An acute sense of the mineral mission revived the search for the golden mountain that posed a particular element of the pre-Petrine legacy. Earlier concerns and anxieties were brought together in new ways. Diplomats, military and mining officers continued seeking the fantastic mountain crammed with precious metals. Diverging accounts appeared; its whereabouts wandered across Central Asia, somewhere between Afghanistan and Khivan khanate.

In the early 1720s, Florio Benevini, Peter's representative in Persia and Bukhara, reported about two golden mountains in Badakhshan, North Afghanistan.[208] Getting reliable facts out of the locals without looking suspicious was too challenging, and his data posed a familiar mix of truth and rumors. Snippets of information were received from the few Russian captives who survived after the unfortunate expedition to Khiva. The government did not rush with dispatching an expedition to conquer the golden mountain this time, for bitter memories of the recent crash were still present.

Another group of surveyors brought more accurate information about a single standing golden-silver mountain in Khivan khanate. They actually claimed to have seen it, identified its name as Sheldekhtau, and mapped its location with more precision. Presumably, the golden mountain stood on a bank of the Ulu Daria River, not very far from the city of Khiva.[209] The surveyors proposed that with a map in hand Russians could reach the place by crossing the Aral Sea by boat.[210]

The further account of a Russian captive in Bukhara, referred to two mountains, one crammed with silver and the other with gold, located in the middle of the Khivan steppe. Presumably, the amount of precious reserves was enough to build up an entire city out of silver and cover it with gold. The local khan remained unaware of these treasures, until a Russian miner, one of the few survivors of the Bekovich's detachment, mapped the mountain. Upon learning about the plentiful metal reserves, the Asian ruler made a wise decision; he did what enlightened imperial elites would never think of.

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[207] Unkovskii, Posol'stvo k Zuingorskomu Khun-Taichzhi, 46.
[208] "Kratkii zhurnal poslannika sekretaria oriental'noi komissii Flloriia Benevini", 130-34; "Kopiia s tsifirnoi reliatsii poslannika Floriia Benevini", 73-74.
[209] *Poezdka v Khivu i obratno, sovershionnaia v 1740-1741 g. Gladyshevym i Muravinym*, 57.
[210] "Lankarta traktu ot kreposti Orskoi cherez Kirgizskoe, Karakalpatskoe, Aral'skoe vladenie do goroda Khivy, opisyvana i sochinena Geodezii Praporshchikom Muravinym 1743 goda ".

Anybody would feel a little uneasy upon hearing that the backward and ignorant khan ordered to murder the miner and prohibited his subjects from getting closer to the precious mountain in fear of a foreign (Russian) invasion.[211]

The contemporary cartography reflected these stories. Although enhanced by European knowledge and technologies, the Petrine mapmakers habitually employed the previous modes of representation used by Semen Remezov. As if following his laconic tag "Kututuloma melts gold", they would put no less dynamic tags "Gold is being mined" (*Zoloto kopaiut*) and "Gold is being caught" (*Zoloto loviat*) on the representations of the Central Asian ranges.[212] (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Gold miners in North Afghanistan on the map "Chast' karty Kapitana Dubrovina."

A particular trend became obvious within the ruling groups' imagination that slowly translated minerals into a symbolic dimension. When a native man came across plentiful iron deposits in one of the mountains of the Rocky Belt, Vasilii Tatishchev baptized the mountain as Blagodat' (Grace) in honor of the ruling empress Anna Ioanovna.[213] Tatishchev interpreted the Orthodox calendar through the mineral lens, as his Grace-Mountain widely referred to Annaberg, a silver mining center in the Saxony. In the age of the intensive cultural transfer, "the Russian Annaberg" reads as an attempt at introducing a new cultural code. This singular action could but did not become a regular practice, however.

[211] *Stranstvovanie Filippa Efremova v Kirgizskoi stepi, Bukharii, Khive, Persii,* 70-71.
[212] The drawing presented by the Prince Gagarin to the Senate, in: Kniazhetskaia, "Istoriia odnoi geograficheskoi oshibki", 57-67. Also, Preobrazhenskii, "Ekonomicheskie karty v doreformennoi Rossii", 105-138.
[213] 'Hanna' means Grace in Old Hebrew. Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy,* 61.

Now that the rulers became confident of spatial control and aware of the clearly defined imperial mission, the meaning of having mineral treasures could be redressed in power patterns. What was the purpose of gaining huge resource wealth? The enlightened makers of discourse did not hesitate to provide a clear answer. The icon of Russian science, Mikhail Lomonosov, explained the matter of state in pragmatic detail. In his opinion, mineral riches fulfilled a range of the purely representative functions that he prioritized in the following order: "to adorn the MAJESTY, to astonish the world, to intimidate the enemies, and to provide abundant prosperity of YOUR faithful subjects" ("*k ukrasheniiu VELICHESTVA, k udivleniiu sveta, k ustraneniiu vragov, i k izbytochnomu dovolstvu vernykh VASHIKH poddannykh"*).[214] This statement indicates that minerals were mobilized to attest to the supreme ruler's majesty. The purpose of prestige and power of monarchy held too little space for other issues. Obviously, this order will remain intact in the coming centuries.

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Russia continued to experience a modern turn in understanding and representing geographical space. It is evident that the maturing Berg Discourse made it successfully into the imperial period, whilst modernity manifested itself through installing further control over the peripheries. The Berg Discourse involved various modern ways of thinking and constructing the imperial space. The crucial element about it was that it contained important principles of the imperial expansion and rule.

By breaking with the pre-Petrine patterns, the discourse revealed several facets that would become paradigmatic in the future. The expanding empire fed the discourse with an essential material – geographical space, whilst the mineral framework defined the mounting imperial presence in the peripheries. What is not arguable is that resource mapping was recognized by the state as a key means to gather knowledge. Unlike the rudimentary previous efforts, modern mapping figured as a driving force in geographical exploration of Russia. This powerful tool posed a major advance for imperial landscapes' domesticating. It sat in a range of power practices, in particular, in the colonization agenda. The ruling elites mapped and imagined unbounded space through the mineral framework.

The crucial shift came about the knowledge making groups. Actual power to produce credible resource-related data shifted from the regional administrators to the

[214] "Dedication to the Ruling Empress Ekaterina" in: Lomonosov, *"Pervykh osnovanii metallurgii"*, (originally in 1762), no page number indicated.

mobile communities of professionals at central and regional agencies. The creators of credible knowledge played a productive role in the construction of peripheral spaces. The government had a fuller picture of the territory and its resource potential due to the systematic descriptions and exploration literature. A wide series of modern practices contributed to the making of resource knowledge. Through these practices, the ruling groups mobilized resource knowledge at a fairly new level and tightened the grip on the recently conquered territories.

One of the nexuses of the mineral fever posed the production of an atlas based upon actual surveying of the whole of the empire.[215] No doubt, a fairly large compilation of maps could have accommodated actual and potential resources of the country. Could it accurately reflect a dynamic and reshuffling patchwork of spaces, places, landscapes, and human networks that constructed the Berg Discourse? It seems that no atlas would have been able to accurately demonstrate the speed, size, and magnitude of the intensive mapping of the Russian mineral colossus.

[215] Svenske, *Materialy po istorii sostavleniia Atlasa Rossiiskoi imperii*, 137-138*;* Gol'denberg, "Karty poleznykh iskopaemykh Rossii 18 veka," 24-37*;* Postnikov, *Razvitie krupnomasshtabnoi geografii,* 102-3; Bagrov, *Istoriia russkoi kartografii,* 441; Khrenov, *Khronologiia otechestvennoi geodezii,* 100.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE RISE OF THE MINERAL GIANT

By the turn of the nineteenth century, the mineral sector of the Romanovs' crown formed a wide state area, as the observer indicated: "For the mining and mineral part in the Russian empire is so broad that it may take up all time of the Minister (of Finances)".[216] A range of agencies and networks were involved in geological exploration and the metallurgical industry. "The Mineral and Mining Law" ("*Ustav Gornyi*") was published on the regular basis.[217]

The aim of this chapter is to attend to several key patterns of the Berg Discourse that would become paradigmatic for the rest of the long imperial age. Each part engages with the period in question from a particular angle of inquiry. First, it explores how the eighteenth-century Berg Discourse created new meanings in the language. How did the professional networks construct the language adequate to their needs and deeds? How did the language accommodate to the new concepts and meanings? Second, the concept of a mining district that built up a modern spatial framework of the country is explored in detail. The next concern is to recover sites and social spaces in which resource knowledge was undertaken. In particular, it traces the emergence of the periodical "Gornyi Zhurnal", the main discursive site of the mineral knowledge making since the 1820s. Lastly, the chapter will move back to the final decades of the previous century in order to explore why this period was crucial for the perception of resource knowledge in the public sphere, and how this kind of collective knowledge was central to educated Russians' understanding of empire.

4.1. Russian Ruda vs. Saxon Berg vs. Imperial Gornyi

Below is only a narrow sketch of the related historical semantics; it does not pretend to be complete.[218] Apparently, power over geographical space and natural resources manifested itself in the descriptive language.[219] The analysis of a language in use is an important way in which to get handle of the Berg Discourse. Hence its earlier linguistic production is not immediately obvious for readers today, a word about it is in

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[216] Vysochaishe utverzhdennyi doklad ministra finansov, pt. IV, 9.
[217] *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi imperii. Tom 7. Ustavy Monetnyi, Gornyi, i o Soli.* Izdaniia 1832, 1842, 1857 godov, etc.
[218] Koselleck, *"*Hinweise auf die temporalen Strukturen begriffsgeschichtlichen Wandels*"*, 29-47; Koselleck, *Begriffsgeschichten. Studien zur Semantik.*
[219] Foucault, *"*The Language of Space*"*, 163-167.

order. It is our argument that the names of the agency known as the Rudokopnyi prikaz, the Berg-College and the Gorny (Mineral and Mining) Department provided three main linguistic paradigms of the discourse and different ways of expressing the new imperial language.

The paradigms cannot be properly assessed unless situated in a broader environment. In exploring the changes in the eighteenth-century vocabularies, our aim is to understand the historical context and the ways through which the versatile discourse affected and saturated the Russian language. This part also highlights the role of cultural transfer, an economic way of creating new notions and structures. Whilst probing the character of relationship between the paradigms, several distinctive shifts and the long-run implications are discussed.

The age of the intensive transfer brought new tools, technologies, and the language. Along with importing ideas and material objects, a lexical invasion from Europe entered into different areas of Russian life in unprecedented ways.[220] In the mining, foreign experience had been a point of constant reference prior to the reforms. Although the Berg Discourse architects had various choices at their disposal, they would borrow the foreign words selectively.

In the early century, the lexicon remained relatively intact. The paradigm *ruda* (ore) held a central linguistic position of discourse. Moreover, it saw a tremendous increase in prestige with the establishment of the Ore-Digging Agency.[221] What else was available in the language of the period? Less noticed, but no less important Latin elements came into usage since the early 1700s: *metally, mineraly* and *minery* (minerals).[222] The Saxon *berg* circulated in the language, too.[223]

The Russian adherence to the Saxon and Swedish mining experience culminated in a borrowing that would have a great impact upon the discourse. If Russia had followed either the French or British model, the discourse and language could have trod another path. However, this should not be reduced to a mechanical move from German into Russian because a single loanword does not make modernity. Expectantly, neither the Ore-Digging Agency nor its too literal name could resist cultural transfer, the air

[220] Hüttl Worth, *Foreign words in Russian;* Birzhakova et al, *Ocherki po istoricheskoi leksikologii*; Vasilevskaia, *"*K metodike izucheniia*"*, 165-171; Otten, *Untesuchungen zu den Fremd- und Leihwörtern bei Peter dem Großen*; Zhivov, *Iazyk i kultura v Rossii 18 veka.*
[221] *PSZ,* 1715, N. 2908.
[222] Kutina, *Formirovanie iazyka russkoi nauki,* 183-187.
[223] Birzhakova et al, *Ocherki po istoricheskoi leksikologii*, 347.

that the imperial elites could never breathe enough of. As discussed earlier, it was replaced by the Berg-College, whose very name manifested a direct link to the German mining.[224] Loaded with cultural prestige, the Petrine borrowing signified a clear break from the earlier language. It also implied the conceptual transfer from ores to a larger substance; along with the mineral meanings, *berg* signifies a mountain and an ore pit.

Let us briefly outline the capacities of *berg*. Despite the structural differences between two languages, most German loanwords were transliterated into Cyrillic letters without substantial change. In the age of the flourishing transfer, the elites painstakingly appropriated the unpronounceable words that were impossible for the previous times. Their sublanguage appropriated the phonetically and morphologically bizarre combinations that would become the norm: *hof/gof, kammer, iustits, manufaktur,* etc. *Berg* was no exception either; Russian quickly absorbed the short element. With its phonetic and graphemic simplicity, the transliteration mirrored the original with some variants: *berk, berkh*. The similar *Burg* signified imperial power in the names of the recently established frontier places: *Ekaterin-, Oren-,* and *Schliusselburg*.

The newly imported paradigm celebrated yet another stage in the arrival of European modernity. How well did *berg* feel and function in the new environment? At first glance, it served well as a communicational tool for the official circles and lower social groups.[225] An ordinary miner was referred to as a *bergauer*. Unlike many other loanwords, folk tongue quickly appropriated the borrowing and simplified it into a colloquial form *bergal.* However, the loanword drove neither *ruda* nor its derivates out of use, and it remained one of the key discursive terms. A point can be made here that neither words nor terms cease and drop out of active use, as Viktor Zhivov has recently shown.[226]

The Saxon paradigm played a decisive part in the advancement of the resource discourse. It embodied the facade of the imperial metallurgical industry: the administration, ranks, activities, equipment, etc. Obviously, in the future, a Russian mining dictionary would contain a wide range of the compounds: *berg-zavody, berg-okrug, berg-uchilishche,* etc. But, unpredictably, *berg* suffered the same fate as its early

[224] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3464; Deriabin, *Istoricheskoe opisanie gornykh del,* 14-22, 148-49; Tatishchev, Leksikon, 186-187.
[225] Zhivov, *"*Istoriia poniatii*"*, 14.
[226] Zhivov, *"*Istoriia poniatii*"*, 14. Tatishchev used the pre-Petrine Polonism *cruszec* until the late 1730s. Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy*, 67.

modern precursor. The very loanword triggered a shift that would move it away from the center and open the way to a truly modern notion.

Apparently, the very 'we' of the Berg Discourse regulated the life of words and determined whether a concept would cease or begin to play a central part in the discourse. It would be tempting to suggest that Vasilii Tatishchev, one of the top mining officials and the senior supervisor at the Siberian factories, can be credited for the shift. On one hand, a note of caution is necessary before it can be firmly connected with one single person. On the other, Tatishchev had enough lobbying power and experience for carrying out a linguistic reform. It is believed that he ordered to replace all *berg*-borrowings with the Russian term *gornyi* in 1734. Despite resistance, his initiative was approved a year later. In terms of geography, the shift posed a rare case, as it occurred not in metropolis, but in the periphery.[227]

The traditional nationalist prism interpreted the replacement as part of a language cleaning campaign.[228] But how is his move to be situated properly into the historical context? What options did Tatishchev draw from? Obviously, he neither wasted time in search of an equivalent nor did he invent an artificial alternative. The actual choice was quite narrow, and is worthy to trace in the rough terms. Four key notions were in use for the metallurgical factories: *rudnye*/*rudokopnye, plavilnye, mineralnye, gornye.*[229] Hypothetically, he could have turned back the time by replacing *berg* with *ruda*. Perhaps, *plavilnye* (smelting) sounded too literal. A good alternative posed the Latin *mineralnye* with a high discursive potency. Why, of all available terms, did he pick out *gorny*?

Tatishchev desired to increase glory and honor of the fatherland. The formal reasons are worthy to quote: “all posts and activities, as well as equipments were called with German words, which many neither knew nor could pronounce and write correctly”.[230] However, this powerful move seems to be inspired by nationalistic motifs only at first glance. On a closer inspection, *berg* failed as a communicative means not due to its presumed foreign background. Apparently, other extra-linguistic factors were

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[227] Men'shenin, *Ob uspekhakh gornogo promysla,* 52*;* Bezobrazov, *Vasilii Nikitich Tatishchev,* 2; Iofa, *Sovremenniki Lomonosova,* 44. Tatishchev referred particularly to Count Biron's opposition: "Leksikon*”,*186; Tatishchev, *Zapiski, pis'ma,* nos. 104, 115.

[228] Men'shenin, *Ob uspekhakh gornogo promysla,* 52; Pavlenko, *Razvitie metallurgicheskoi promyshlennosti*, 157-58.

[229] Ekspeditsiia Gornykh i mineral'nykh del. *PSZ,* 1731, N. 5860*;* Tatishchev, *Zapiski, pis'ma,* nos. 19, 21, 25, 25A, 26.

[230] *Tatishchev, “*Leksikon*”,* 186.

at play. It is evident that the staff of the peripheral agency was keen neither to adopt a new language nor to properly reproduce it as required by central elites. To Tatishchev's deep disappointment, they were unable to meet the standards in using the essential *berg*-terms. The low ranked agents in Ekaterinburg failed to capture the trends and cope with the language emanating from the metropolis. Their failure discloses social specifics of the receiving milieu and their inability to meet the expectations of the top mining "Kulturträger".

What motifs drove Tatishchev? Obviously, his double-sided concern formed an attempt at a truly imperial purism. The fact that the backward staff mispronounced and mistreated the key borrowing made him feel that both Russian and German came under threat. His move meant to restore a linguistic balance between the donating and receiving language. These efforts enabled peripheral agents to use a more convenient and familiar term for communicating the key terms without disfiguring *berg*.

The important change restructured the paradigms.[231] By the mid-century, the little used *gornyi* was invested with the specific semantics.[232] Only the significant impact of the Saxon *berg* allowed recharging the void connotations of *gornyi* with the mineral and mining meanings. By procuring a central position, the half-empty term set up a paradigm of its own. It is evident that neither in the pre-Petrine period nor afterwards did it possess capacities sufficient for making it to the core of discourse. Otherwise, why would not "Gornyi Prikaz" have appeared in Muscovy?

Tatishchev's action pressed a secondary term into service by loading it with a certain meaning. Reborn by his move, *gornyi* took up now a central place in the discourse. Formally, it cannot be considered a newly coined term, as it presented a classical equivalent in the receiving language. Rather, it embodied the transition to a new stage in this empire-building area. Nevertheless, Russian nationalists are recommended to refrain from expressing signs of early joy. In fact, the new paradigm only appeared to be Russian, as the Saxon *berg* was too deeply hidden at its heart.

What were its other advantages? Three moments may be singled out. First, *gornyi* served as a clear referent for *berg;* it referred directly to the Saxon experience. Second, the Russian geographical imagination had already provided for a symbolic link between mountains and minerals; that was one of the reasons behind a successful

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[231] Zhivov, *"*Istoriia poniatii*",* 15. One of the central concerns in Idem, *Iazyk i kultura v Rossii 18 veka.*
[232] *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi,* II, 231-32.

recruiting of a secondary term. The early semantic and historic voids of *gora* were painlessly filled with mining content. The further production followed the structural formulas of *berg*.[233] Third, invested with the larger mining meanings, the new paradigm operated well due to a simple fact. Until then, the topographical semantics of *gornyi* remained on the margins of the language use, the same way the mountain ranges loomed on the imperial edges. Contemporary geographies knew the Rocky Belt, the foothills of the Caucasus, and, to a lesser extent, several barely mapped ranges of Siberia. This may explain why Russians faced up no semantic conflict: they continued to refer to mountains as *gory* and *kamni*.

The semantic shift revealed a splitting moment between social lexicons. Despite using the same word, elite and low groups invested it with different meanings. In a sense, *gornyi* did not belong to the traditional Russian language. Whilst the professionals mapped minerals, lower groups filled the same word with the different meanings that will be examined later. Obviously, the shifts restructured the linguistic dimensions of the discourse. The pre-Petrine triad *rudy – krushets – kamen* (ore-cruszec-rock) transformed into a modern formula *rudy – berg – gornyi*.

These important events occurred in a relatively short period of time, the 1710s – 1730s. The linguistic versatility of the discourse produced an unusual variety of the paradigms, which began sliding together in use throughout the imperial age. For a while, the new layers of signification did not obliterate the old ones. The *berg* paradigm continued further, as *ruda* did earlier. Despite the overlapping usage, there was a clear hierarchy between them, at least, until the next century. *Ruda* implied the practical and material matters. *Berg* stood for the administrative part: *Berg-Amt, -Direktorium*, *-Kollegiia,* etc.[234] The hybrid *gornyi* covered the rest. Gradually, it expanded in scope and added the administrative, mining and scientific areas[235]. By doing so, it eclipsed *berg* that was extant in few key positions at the mid-century. *Ruda* suffered a worse fate: once at the height, it literally dropped to the lows.[236]

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[233] The key term of the discourse was an adjective, whereas the noun *gora* figured in a narrow sense as a mine. It proved productive resulting in several dozens of terms. Spasskii, *Gornyi slovar',* I, 92-100.
[234] Fal'k, *Zapiski puteshestviia,* 508-9. The professions that did not belong to the German *berg*-circle were translated as *gornyi:* markscheider – gornyi mezhevcshchik. Tatishchev, *"*Leksikon*"*, 241.
[235] Mineralogy, geology, geognosy, paleontology, geodesy, petrology, metallurgy, parts of chemistry, numismatics. Belozerov, *Ukazatel' knig po predmetam do gornoi chasti.*
[236] Few *Berg*-words circulated in the late century: *-amt, -gauer, -gauptman, -geshvoren, -direktorium, -inspektor, -kollegiia, -meister, -privilegiia, -probirer, -rat, -reglament*. Mikhel'son, *Ob'iasnenie vsekh inostrannykh slov*, 88. Miners were called 'rudokopy'. Spasskii, *Gornyi slovar',* II, 152.

Due to the advance of the Alpine aesthetics, the term *gornyi* gradually lost the mining meanings that persisted now on the margins. Popular geographies refilled it with the semantics of a mountainous relief. The titles of the two periodicals illustrate this striking gap: the mining journal "*Gornyi zhurnal*", published since 1825, and "*Ezhegodnik Russkogo gornogo obhchestva*" published by the Russian Mountaineering Society since the 1900s. Apparently, the readership did not feel discomfort that the modern-day speakers do. The same regards the huge mining regions *Stepno-Severnyi gornyi okrug* and *Kavkazskaia gornaia oblast* (lit. the Caucasian mountainous region).[237] The center of the Altai district, Barnaul, was given the mining (*gornyi*) status, although the actual mountain ranges were located a few hundred miles away. *Gruzinskaia gornaia ekspeditsiia* (lit. Georgian mountainous expedition) reads as a trip with either a military or scientific purpose, but it posed a regional institution that supervised the mining in Georgia.[238]

Further advancement of natural sciences resulted in a range of new terms expanding and differentiating the terminology. The 1897 census discerned between the categories of "extraction of ores" and "mining and metallurgy", whereas scientist Dmitrii Mendeleev criticized the use of *gornyi* in the mining.[239]

The analysis of the linguistic production of the Berg Discourse highlights the dynamics of the language change. It excludes the nationalist interpretation 'ours vs. foreign' by emphasizing the impact of cultural influences, which, if once emerged, never simply vanished. The discursive shifts illustrate neither a victory nor a failure of the receiving language. They exemplify a particular facet in empire-building project and highlight the ways of how the discourse shaped the language.

Gornyi turned into the key term of the rapidly growing mining industry. It became a culturally pervasive equivalent to the borrowing due to its earlier presence in Muscovite resource geographies. Its recent meanings could sustain only with the reference to *berg*. For the rest of the imperial period, *gornyi* formed the platform to the entire discourse and an umbrella to all resource activities. A confrontation between the 'old' and 'new' styles of the language making was resolved productively: a series of the metamorphoses resulted in a modern synthesis. The discourse preserved the early

[237] *Svod postanovlenii o gornoi promyshlennosti*, 17.
[238] *PSZ,* 1816, N. 26116, § 40.
[239] Mendeleev, *K poznaniui Rossii*, 78-79.

modern term, assimilated the borrowing, creating a paradigm that posed a culmination of its precursors' discursive work. In fact, it stood for what imperial Russia was.

It seems that this case will not contribute much into current debates about what happens first, changes in the language or changes in material practices.[240] As such, the analysis suggests that the changes in the language followed material practices, although, at the same time, the language shaped them to a certain extent. Although fairly distinct, three paradigms were inextricably intermingled, and this reveals an amazing plasticity and versatility of the discourse. The linguistic changes made the circle become complete by taking Russians' keen interest in minerals right back to where they had started.

4.2. The Patchwork of the Mining Districts

For the sake of the effective governing, various central agencies carved up the country into a range of districts (*okrug*). Late imperial Russia comprised approximately twenty kinds of districts.[241] In the administrative sense, it was the most pragmatic tool in the arsenal of the government that loaded these territorial units with a set of certain meanings.[242] Mostly in the shadow of the provinces, the districts existed in the officials' imagination. Depending on public importance, some territorial units were well promoted in popular geographies, e.g. military and educational districts, whereas most of the districts remained barely known to the general public.[243]

First attempts at the resource region making were made in the early century. To start with, the 1719 Mineral Privilege instructed the prospective miners to mark a square of 250 sazhen' in length and breadth *("250 sazhen dolgory, 250 sazhen shiriny"*).[244] Apparently, the German loanword *Distrikt* was in use since the 1730s.[245] Vasilii Tatishchev would refer to "a special district" and "a mining province" (*gornaia*

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[240] Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference,* 83.
[241] *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi po azbuchnomu poriadku raspolozhennyi,* pt. I, 288-289, 254-255; *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 18 veka*, XVI, 254-255. Voennye, uchebnye, tamozhennye, sudebnye i mirovye, korpusa zhandarmov, gornye, kazennykh i sudebnykh palat, pochtovo-telegrafnye, putei soobshcheniia, vneshnie, pogranichnye, karantinnye, lotsionnye, superintendetskie, okhrany mineral'nykh vod, rastitel'no-geograficheskie, etc. Provinces and dioceses were divided into districts.
[242] Murphy, "Regions as social constructs", 29; Harvey, "Between Space and Time", 418.
[243] Tagirova, *"*Mapping the Empire's Economic Regions*",* 126*;* LeDonne, *''*Administrative Regionalization in the Russian Empire*'',* 5-33.
[244] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3464; 1773, N. 14048.
[245] Gennin, *Opisanie Ural'skikh i Sibirskikh zavodov 1735 goda*, 603; *PSZ,* 1764, N. 12075, art. 14.

provinstiia).[246] A distinct territory that belonged to the so-called *Ekaterinburgskoe vedomstvo*, an industrial area in West Siberia, indicated further attempts at separating the mining areas from the rest of the country.[247]

In 1804 and 1806, two important documents appeared under the guidance of the Minister of Finances. They constituted the core of the imperial mineral legislation.[248] These had significant implications for the territorial order of the country. An effective recipe borrowed from the European experience brought into being an entirely different system of spatial organization.[249] An advanced scheme reconfigured the realm by transforming it into an association of the mining districts. A modern order mobilized space, people, and resources on a new level.

What lay behind the framework of the mineral regions (*gornyi, gorno-zavodskoi okrug*)? As an essential tool of the resource regionalization, it constructed a highly organized mineral space of Russia. The traditional patterns of the region making were not applicable to it. Mining districts operated on the different principles of organization, for they were neither geo- and topographical nor administrative divisions. The main purpose was to control and facilitate the mining in a particular territory. They appeared as a result of the intensive mapping and the establishment of the metallurgical factories. Their boundaries did not coincide with the administrative lines. Unlike the others, these regions were more intimately tied with geographical space and material practices. The elements of natural and cultural landscape, forests, rivers, deposits, mines, factories, etc. were divorced from the rest of the territory and transformed into a single entity by the ruling groups' efforts and work of imagination.

The legislation did not establish new mining regions by pen; the territorial circles that existed around factories and towns were acknowledged as districts. Hypothetically, the government could carve up as many mining units as possible. However, they largely depended on the material factors: the availability of reserves, the mapping practices and infrastructure, etc. The changing environment constituted the main point of vulnerability for the mining regions in the long-run perspective, since they could literally cease as soon as natural resources became exhausted. This darker side of the resource regionalization confirms that: "the key question about space and

[246] Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy*, 130, 134.
[247] Bakmeister, *Kratkaia Rossiiskoi Imperii geografiia,* no page indicated.
[248] *PSZ,* 1804, N. 21460, Vysochaishe utverzhdennyi doklad ministra finansov; 1806, N. 22208.
[249] *PSZ,* 1806, N. 22208, chapter 1, pt. B., nos. 13, 15.

place is not what they are, but what they do".[250] Natural factors constrained the rulers' power that depended on the very geographical space.

The imperial appetite for raw resources was evident in the making of the districts. In the early century, the government activated geological search in the South Caucasus. Only two months after Georgia was officially incorporated into the empire, the Main Expedition on the Establishing of the Mining Production in Georgia was set up.[251] This and other similar cases reveal consistent conceptual similarities; it is obvious that Russia's resource concerns closely accompanied the territorial expansion. At the turn of the twentieth century, the government felt so confident about the non-stop expansion that it would go so far with establishing the mining regions in the adjacent countries before they were actually added to the empire, e.g. "the Kvantunskii mining district" in "the soon-would-be Russian" Chinese Manchuria.[252] Such moves only continued the imperial rulers' earlier inclinations, which considered natural riches of the nearby countries as inherently theirs.

The renewed effort at resource mobilization brought into being the new territorial order that split the empire into an association of larger and smaller districts. The 1806 decree divided central Russia into several larger resource regions that were referred to as the same *gornyi okrug*.[253] Late imperial Russia comprised eleven larger resource regions (*gornaia oblast*) that consisted of the lesser districts.[254] The uniform grid of the mining regions formed one of the major advances in structuring the seemingly boundless space through the resource lens. Their coordinated patchwork constructed a definite image of the Russian Mineral Empire in the rulers' minds.

4.3. The Gornyi Zhurnal: at the Crossroads of Knowledge Making

Throughout the eighteenth century, more networks and sites of the resource knowledge making could be distinguished in the society. As discussed above, the members of the Academy of Sciences assumed the position of the main makers of mineral knowledge since the mid-century. Geographical and geological exploration,

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[250] Hubbard, "Space / Place", 47.
[251] *PSZ,* 1801, N. 20007, 20055; 1816, N. 26116; Esadze, *Ocherk istorii gornogo dela,* 22-27.
[252] *Gornoe delo v Rossii,* 13-22.
[253] *Vysochaishe utverzhdennyi doklad Ministra Finansov*, pt. III.
[254] Devier, Bredov, *Svod postanovlenii o gornoi promyshlennosti*, 16. The latter posed several kinds: regular mining districts; those that supervised private mining activities; state-run factories; and those, supervised by the Mining agencies. *Praviashchaia Rossia*, pt. 3, no year notification, 241-46; "Istruktsiia po nadzoru za chastnoi promyshlennost'iu ot 1 maia 1892 g." § 2, *Sbornik uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii Pravitel'stva, otnosiashchikhsia do ustavov gornykh*, II.

as well as mapmaking constituted the bulk of mineral knowledge. Geological and mining literature appeared mostly as single books and dispersed publications of the Academy, or in the rare periodicals.[255]

It is evident that mineral knowledge had been in the process of being constructed. The very nature of this kind of consciousness required its makers to be both here and there, in the field and in the study room. It had been made in a variety of well and less known sites and social networks rather than in strictly disciplinary spaces of the Academy of Sciences. Mineral knowledge had a kind of unsettled nature until a particular location of its production came into view.

However, the period saw an attempt at creating a separate network away from the realm of the Academy of Sciences. When the Mining School (*Gornoe uchilishche*) was founded in 1773, a particular Scientific Committee (*Uchenoe sobranie*) appeared as part of the school.[256] This social and professional site functioned for a relatively short period of time, from 1774 till 1778. Regrettably, this failed attempt at constructing a network of experts did not leave any serious traces.[257]

Two further events facilitated the emergence of a main site of the mineral knowledge production in Russia. In 1825, the Finance Ministry established the Mineral and Mining Scientific Committee (*Gornyi Uchenyi Komitet*) in St. Petersburg with about 120 experts, members, and correspondents.[258] This was followed by an important move: the Committee launched a periodical "The Gornyi Zhurnal" (the Mining Journal).[259] Through the periodical, the Ministry of Finances took control over the knowledge production away from the Academy of Sciences.

In an inaugural speech, the head of the Mineral and Mining Department, Colonel E.V. Karneev shared a bright vision in that networks of enlightened mining officials (*gornye chinovniki*) and private developers would cooperate on the knowledge making. Moreover, his vision incorporated the emergence of the regional societies at all metallurgical factories across the country.[260] The journal was meant to operate at the

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[255] "*Ezhemesiachnye sochineniia i izvestiia o uchenyskh delakh*", "*Ezhenedelnye Izvestiia Vol'nogo Ekonomicheskogo Obshchestva*", etc.
[256] *PSZ,* 1773, N. 14048.
[257] Sokolov, *Istoricheskoe i statisticheskoe opisanie Gornogo Kadetskogo Korpusa*, 12.
[258] "Otchet Uchenogo Komiteta po gornoi i solianoi chasti za 1828 god."
[259] "Akt otkrytiia Uchenogo Komiteta", III-XXVI; "Podrobnaia zapiska, podnesennaia na Vysochaishee blagousmotrenie g. Ministrom Finansov, o sostavlenii Uchenago Komiteta po gornoi i solianoi chasti i ob izdanii Gornogo Zhurnala."
[260] "Akt otkrytiia Uchenogo Komiteta", III-XXVI; Popov, "Semidesiatiletie Gornogo Uchenogo Komiteta", 2-6.

nexus of professional networks. Each mining engineer was supposed to have a copy at his disposal. Twelve books appeared each year with 1 200 copies of each book.[261]

”The Gornyi Zhurnal” signaled a modern level of resource mobilization, as it became a dynamic forum for a discussion of a wide range of scientific, economic, and practical problems. As a form of communication and publicity, it formed a dominant site of the generation of mineral knowledge. It is evident that the metropolis continued increasing control over the production of important data through the journal. Networks of contributors, experts and engineers, naturalists and university professors that extended beyond St. Petersburg and Moscow replaced the members of the imperial academy as the main knowledge makers for the rest of the century. The journal posed a triumph of the mapping and mining industries. By disciplining manifold people, institutions, and resources into a single system, it made an entire age in the resource knowledge production.

“The Gornyi Zhurnal” was not the only site of generating the mining data. Throughout the century, a number of similar journals appeared that met a continual need for producing and reproducing resource knowledge.[262] The constellations of professional networks operated within the formal learned bodies and the less formal societies.[263] The awareness of mineral wealth was key to the learned societies. Further on, they would increase in number due to the opening of public life during the Great Reforms.[264] These networks connected others interested in increasing mineral knowledge of Russia. Capturing a complex web of the networks in its entirety requires further research, however.

4.4. Imperial Riches in the Public Mind

Up until this point, the study handled the officials’ and professionals’ input in the making of the Berg Discourse. It is beyond question that ideas about mineral

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[261] ”Otchet Uchenogo Komiteta po gornoi i solianoi chasti za 1828 god”, 134-146.

[262] A weekly periodical “Manufakturnye i Gornozavodskie izvestiia” by the Department for the Manufacture and Inner Trade since the 1840s; from the 1860s onward: “The Annual Book for the Russian mining people” (“Pamiatnaia knizhka dlia russkikh gornykh liudei”) based on the similar periodical of the Freiberg Mining Academy; “The Collections of the Mining Statistics”; “The Gornozavodskaia Gazeta”; “Vestnik Zolotopromyshlennosti i Gornogo dela voobshche”, etc.

[263] The Mining Institute, the Mining Scientific Committee, the Free Economical Society, the Imperial Russian Geographical Society and its regional branches, the Russian Mineralogical Society, the Society of Friends of the Natural History, etc.

[264] For particular societies see: Bradley, *Voluntarily associations in Tsarist Russia. Science, Patriotism and Civil Society*.

resources traversed the realms of public culture. It is hard to speculate without firm evidence about what forms and images the resources took on in everyday life of imperial subjects. As many other realities of empire, minerals were not something that ordinary people could see on the daily basis. Obviously, there were not many informal places where educated and ordinary people could directly encounter and experience minerals. What was the place and role of mineral wealth in the Russian society? How was it represented in the public mind? How can the impact of the resource riches on imperial consciousness be captured? These questions will be treated in brush strokes in order to outline a research problem.

Whilst the Enlightenment scientists vigorously mapped the mountain terrains, the general public processed large body of spatial knowledge made by the producers of credible knowledge. Since the last quarter of the eighteenth century onward, widespread civic interest in resources of the realm was shaped by various analytical spaces: geographical writings, lexicons and descriptions, translations, atlases, and educational materials. The general public did what can be loosely called secondary mineral mapping; through these descriptions, the educated people re-mapped and consumed intellectual products made by the scholars. These sources are crucial to our understanding of the place of mineral riches in the public imagination, as the descriptions fostered a public awareness of natural riches and brought together mountains, minerals, and empire.

In the public sphere, the idea of mineral wealth of the Romanovs' crown was mapped in a double-sided process. On one hand, the awareness of vast resources was constructed along with a general picture of the territorial size of the empire. On the other, the public mind tied immense reserves to the mountain terrains.[265] Descriptions of mountains as mineral sources figured prominently in the geographical literature. In popular geographies, awareness of resources as one of the main merits of the country was evident. It took a form of the consistent framework that included resources,

[265] *Kratkoe zemleopisanie Rossiiskago gosudasrstva*, ch.II, pt. III, §23-24; ch. IV, §89; Chebotarev, *Geograficehskoe i metodicheskoe opisanie Rossiiskoi Imperii,* 268-71; *Novyi i polnyi geograficheskii slovar'*, pt. II, 297-99; *Nachertanie obshchago topograficheskago i fizicheskago opisaniia Rossiiskoi imperii,* 3-4, 30-35; *Noveishaia vseobshchaia geografiia, soderzhashchaia podrobnoe opisanie Rossiskoi imperii,* 63-67; *Vseobshchaia geografiia*, *soderzhashchaia v sebe prostrannoe svedenie o chetyrekh chastiakh sveta s prisovokupleniem obozreniia Rossiskoi imperi,* 20-25; *Geograficheskii slovar' Rossiskago gosudarstva*, pt. I, 137-139; pt. III, 29; Ziablovskii, *Statisticheskoe opisanie Rossiiskoi Imperii v nyneshnem eie sostoianii s predvaritelnymi poniatiami o statistike,* 176-304; Idem, *Noveishee zempleopisanie Rossiiskoi imperii.* Pt. 1-2, 36-42, 49-66; *Noveishee zemleopisanie Rossiiskoi imperii s nekotorymi statisticheskimi zamechaniiami,* 22-24, 50-53, etc.

mountain terrains, and the territorial magnitude of the country. Expressed through the tropes of plenteousness and exclusivity, the mineral poetics replaced the early modern poetics of the Siberian fur.[266] The content of the mountains was represented as available in large quantities. The assessing of the yet unchartered wealth was done with the rhetorical means: "but what country in the world possesses such numerous mineral treasures like Russia?"[267]

Step by step, keen interest in minerals entered into public consciousness. This kind of awareness evolved as part of larger imperial discourses that incorporated the idea of Russia as the largest country worldwide.[268] The society engaged with geographical space as a matter of imperial identity both in a sense of knowing about the size of the country and its immeasurable mineral reserves. Russia's extensive territory became a source of pride and self-definition for the elites. It is evident that in the same way they grew proud of vast reserves that the imperial peripheries contained.

The sense of pride and superiority based on this wealth would gradually reach the broader circles of the society throughout the century. The idea prevailed in the public imagination that the empire possessed the wealth of mineral riches. Geography schoolbooks routinely taught about mountains and minerals.[269] A discerned public interest in resources was present in the popular literature, too. Furthermore, the ordinary public could see more of mineral wealth. By the mid-century, they could observe the azurite and malachite pillars in the main Orthodox cathedrals of the metropolis, or study mineral specimen of the Russian Topographical Collection, etc. The periodicals reported about success of the imperial mineral and mining divisions (*gornye otdely*) at the International Exhibitions.[270] The latter served as regular sites of demonstrating massive stone vases, and similar artifacts to the international public.

This chapter singled out four important areas in the further evolvement of the Berg Discourse. First, it examined the dynamics of the language change. Second, it outlined the new spatial grid of the country that was based upon the resource exploiting.

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[266] Kornilov, *Zamechaniia o Sibiri*, 109. Also, Bakkarevish, *Statisticheskoe obozrenie Sibiri*, 51-61.
[267] Men'shenin, *Ob uspekhakh gornogo promysla,* 3.
[268] One of the geographical axioms that Soviet schools persistently taught that the country took up the one-sixth of the Earth. However, the tendency to map Russia's size from the global perspective appeared in the early empire building: Krasheninnikov, *Opisanie zemli Kamchatki,* 89; Bakmeister, *Kratkaia Rossiiskoi Imperii Geografiia*, no page #; *Noveishaia vseobshchaia geografiia, soderzhashchaia podrobnoe opisanie Rossiskoi imperii,* 31.
[269] Belokha, *Uchebnik vseobshchei geografii*, 29; Obodovskii, *Kratkaia vseobshchaia geografiia*, 100.
[270] *Gornozavosdskaia promyshlennost' Rossii. Izdanie Gornogo departaments. Vsemirnaia Kolumbova vystavka.*

Third, it explored ”The Gornyi Zhurnal” as the dominant site of the mineral knowledge generation. In a literal sense, the Berg Discourse occurred in “The Gornyi Zhurnal”. It also captured the ways in which the public mind perceived mineral resources. Geographical writings did more than anything else to promote awareness of minerals and their inherent link to the mountains as well as the size of empire. Further work remains to be done on public discourses, and the impact of resource wealth on imperial and national consciousness. How did the society situate itself in relation to the rulers' power over minerals? This perspective of inquiry suggests cultural anxieties and mixed responds that echoed larger imperial discourses.

Before concluding the chapter, let us turn to a textual source that seized the impact of the Berg Discourse on the Russian society in an unusual way. It is a depiction of an amazing ballet scene that concludes the comic opera “The Ore-Diggers” (“*Rudokopy*”) by the official of the fairly highly rank and poet Gavrila Derzhavin in the early 1810s.[271] Set in the Riphean Mountains (the Ural), his phantasmagoria depicts a range of bizarre figures: gnomes, shamans, Siberian natives, a Russian, and a female ruler of Siberia, and the personages of the fairy tales, mermaids. The metaphorical participants of the ballet are highly energetic: the shamans dance and enter into a trance state; gnomes map and mine Siberian minerals; the female ruler with a golden crown on the top of her head reigns, whereas the Russian coordinates and harmonizes the efforts of gnomes and natives clad in leaves, feathers, and deer leather. It is amusing to see that in the end it is the Russian, who hands out the pieces of gold and silver to the natives.

Certain actors and networks are evident behind these figures. Borrowed from European fairy tales, gnomes symbolize foreign experts. The figure of the Russian embodies the elites' collective resource consciousness and mineral mission: to map, mine, and benefit from underground treasures of the colonies. Despite its total bizarreness, the scene perfectly details the ruling elites, social networks, and sites in the making and moving resource knowledge across the empire. These and other figures, their concerns and interactions saturated the versatile Russian Berg Discourse.

[271] Derzhavin, "Rudokopy", 741-42.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE RUSSIAN MOUNTAIN DRIVE

The previous chapters argued that the mineral and mining facets dominated Berg Discourse. The ruling elites regarded highlands as "a motherland of minerals." whereas the mountain terrains that contained no obvious resources as nonsense were treated as "an imaginary burden".[272] However, the entire discourse cannot be reduced to the mineral part. The process of steady imperial encroachment and territorial gain extended the conceptual understanding of discourse by adding new facets. Whom else did the imperial authorities grant power over mountains? The networks of borderland officers, mapmakers, and geographers measured mountains on a completely different principle. How was their power over the mountains manifested? What were key modalities through which they appropriated this landscape? Did the mountains set limits to the expansion; were they considered a topographical strength or a point of vulnerability in protecting the empire?

The chapter begins with exploring the role of the mountains in the construction of state borders and in the geopolitical influence from the late seventeenth century onward. The concept of the mountain ranges as natural borders of the country will be examined. It is evident that mountains formed a symbolic element of empire building. Then, the focus will turn to how imaginary geographies impacted on the emergence of the Altai range in writings and on maps. Further, the chapter will explore "the Great Mountain Game" and to the role of the mountain terrains in the public imaginations.

5.1. Mountain Geographies and Borders

In the process of building up an immense empire, Russia advanced into Asia. Being surrounded by advanced European countries in the west and embraced by cold seas in the northeast, its potential expansion directed only east- and southwards. The external borders became increasingly defined, as the Russian state came into immediate contact with the Asian countries: the Ottoman Empire, Persia, loose Turkestan khanates, Afghanistan, China including Outer Mongolia and Tibet. Along with other factors, these countries had one particular feature in common: long and enduring mountain belts stretched across them.

[272] "Ogromnost' tiazhkuiu ploda lishennykh gor," Lomonosov, "Pis'mo o pol'ze stekla", 92.

By the turn of the seventeenth century, the territorial expansion brought Muscovy to direct contact with the Chinese Empire. The 1689 Treaty of Nerchinsk introduced a new topographical element into the Russian geopolitical arsenal.[273] Then, fixing the exact eastern boundaries was not a primary concern of the government; the treaty apathetically defined the international borderline along the Gorbitsa River and the nameless *Kamen*. This was the first time for the mountain ranges to emerge in the Russian boundary agreements.

However, the changing geopolitical reality required an exact work on outlining the distant borders. The highlands figured now as important strategic sites. The 1727 Burlinskii agreement between imperial Russia and China as well as other border treaties with the Asian countries treated this landscape in a different manner, for there was a lot of growing concern for a detailed border definition. This document meticulously enumerated the ranges and single peaks by their local names, so that some parts of the agreement could pose a Mongolian mountain dictionary.[274]

From the early century on, most international borders with the Asian countries were drawn across the highland zones.[275] Rivers, the traditional tool of making sense of space, gave way to the mountain systems that became a reliable marker of the state and civilization borders, as Mark Bassin has pointed out in his seminal study.[276] Step by step, the rulers modified the ranges for their agenda by turning them into an indispensable element for the imaginary empire building. The military manipulated the mountains to such an extent that Colonel Mikhail Venuikov resolutely dismissed the steppe as a convenient border zone by favoring the mountains.[277]

The mountain ranges were used as a standard grid in outlining the empire on maps. The brown colored stripes embodied thousands of miles of the state borders.[278] Nevertheless, only work of imagination and maps could accurately divide the massive physical landmarks. In practice, the work on the ground was surely more complex, as the mountains formed a difficult site for maintaining a borderline.

The ruling elites occasionally employed symbolical resources of the highlands in frontier building. A series of forts with a component '*gorsk*' emerged along the

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[273] *RKO, 1689-1916*, no. 1, 9-11.
[274] *PSZ,* 1727, N. 5143, 5180, 5189; 1728, N. 5286,
[275] *PSZ,* 1726, N. 4973; *Dogovory Rossii s Vostokom*, 189-93, 208-14; *Sbornik pogranichnykh dogovorov*, nos. 40-43, 50, 52, 62.
[276] Bassin, "Russia between Europe and Asia", 1-17.
[277] Venuikov, *Ocherk politicheskoi etnografii*, 11.
[278] Tsvetkov, "Prostranstvo i granitsy Aziatskoi Rossii", 39-40.

borderlines. The obvious tautology of *kamen* and *gora* intermingled in the Siberian fortress Ust-Kamenogorsk set up in 1718. By the end of the century, this practice was at work in the Caucasus, at a newly established fort Konstantinogorsk.

Perhaps, one of the earliest direct encounters of the Russian army with the mountain terrains occurred in 1722, when Russians attempted to invade the Persian provinces on the Caspian coast.[279] The long conquest of the North Caucasus and the war against the mountaineers would have dramatic impact on spatial and war experience of the empire.

Russians mapped the mountain ranges with military goals in mind. It is evident that for the military elites the mountains posed an impediment to the expansionist plans, be it the Tian Shan or the Pamirs.[280] This topographical scene was an essential factor in the expansion strategy, as war with Turkey and in the Balkans confirm.[281] Alexandr Snesarev, the high-ranked military official of late empire, was concerned that all potential war theaters of Russia were to be located in the mountain belts.[282] The experts took into account the difficulty of crossing the harsh terrains and discussed conditions of mountain combat. Flatlands were regarded as bases, whereas highlands served as the settings of potential war.[283]

Since the mid-nineteenth century, maps of Asiatic Russia actually presented numerous territorial opportunities for the expansion that awaited the empire in this part of the world. Some depictions underrepresented or simply lacked the signs of the state border.[284] Open segments on the map did not impart a sense of vulnerability of the imperial boundaries, however. On the contrary, the borderline between the empire and the potential Asian colonies became blurred. This would-be Asiatic Russia gave liberty to imagine further penetration deeply into the adjacent countries.

5.2. Maps Produce Mountains: the Altai Range

Two main channels, textual and cartographic, were at play in producing mountains by the mid-eighteenth century. Both offered shifting and contradictory ways of mapping. The geographical landmarks and regions known now as the Ural, the Caucasus, and the Altai were in the midst of being mapped. Several descriptions

[279] *Opisanie Kaspiiskago moria i chinennykh na nem rossiiskikh zavoevaniiakh,* 54-105.
[280] *Zapiski po voennoi geografii*, 78.
[281] *Voennaia entsiklopediia*, VIII, 407-408.
[282] Snesarev, *Voennaia geografia Rossii*, 27-28, 34.
[283] Ibid., 27.
[284] Karta Aziiatskoi Rossii. Sostavlena po noveishim svedeniiam polkovnikom Il'inym. 1864.

recounted scarce knowledge about the Rocky Belt, the mountain terrains of Siberia and the newly established Orenburgskaia province.[285]

However, the cartography was far behind in this project. Due to the lack of the standard ways of depicting the mountains, general maps continued to represent vacant spaces. As Peter Perdue has pointed out, cartography cannot be assessed as "a simple development from inexact to exact, but a process in which shifting forms of representation are influenced by cultural environments".[286] The mapmakers would either disregard the major mountain ranges, or merely depict the nameless neat hills, as the 1745 general map of Russia did. Up until the end of the century, mountain mapping varied between an intensive depicting of the highlands of the country and beyond to the complete ignoring of these features.[287]

Before we move to how the Altai has come into use as a place name on maps, a brief overview of mapping the Caucasus and the Ural is in order. It seems that early modern Russian geographies did not know the name "the Caucasus". The area was mapped as a nameless mountainous region between the Black and Caspian seas.[288] Muscovites kept close contacts with the native inhabitants of this region, mostly Cherkess and Kabarda. Formal deputations were sent to the Orthodox Church leaders and rulers of Imeretiia, Kakhetiia, and Georgia. Russians often referred to the latter as "Dadianskaia zemlia" after the local ruling dynasty.[289]

The geographical writings of the early century referred to the area as the Kaukazskie or Kaspiiskie range.[290] The further expansion brought the unification and clarity, however. By employing an umbrella name "the Caucasus", the Russian expansionist concerns facilitated the incorporation of this unframed territory populated by multiple ethnicities. Since the 1780s, imperial geographies saw the emergence of a range of the geographical objects with the name "Kavkazskaia": a massive mountain range, a defense line, an oblast, a province, a namestnichestvo. *Kavkazskie gory* were divided into the Grand and the Little Caucasus.[291]

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[285] Tatishchev indicated eight different categories of mountains. *Izbrannye trudy*, 2, 134, 156-158. Also, Rychkov, *Topografiia Orenburgskaia*, 233-240.
[286] Perdue, "Boundaries, Maps, and Movement", 253-286.
[287] Kirilov, "Generalnaia karta", 1734; "General'naia karta Vtoroi Kamchatskoi ekspeditsii", 1742; *Atlas Rossiiskoi 1745 goda*; "Tabula Geographica Generalis, Imperii Russici", 1776.
[288] *Kniga Bolshomu Chertezhu,* 146-47.
[289] *Materialy po istorii gruzino-russkikh otnoshenii*, *1615-1640; ZPR,* 270-89.
[290] Tatishchev, *"*Leksikon Rossiiskoi istoricheskoi, geograficheskoi, politicheskoi*"*, 321.
[291] "Mappae Sistens Regionem Cuban", 1783; Maksimovich, Shchekatov, *Geograficheskii slovar' Rossiiskogo gosudarstva,* Vol. 3, 14-30.

In the same period, the early modern reference *Kamennyi Poias* (the Rocky Belt) was transformed into the Ural Range, a place name of the Tatar origin. [292] It was believed that the Ural stretched through the entire Asia to Far East.[293] Such attempts at transnational mapping added a sense of global belonging. The lack of proof did not disturb the geographers to depict the Ural as a long line originating out of the polar areas, and direct it either east- or southwards to the Indus River. Inherited from early modern knowledge, the imaginary Syrt-Alginskii range presumably connected the Rocky Belt and the Altai.[294] Only the remark of Alexander von Humboldt would erase this elegant half-circle off the maps.[295]

Perhaps, no other mountain range illustrates the representational breaks in imperial geo- and cartography better than the Altai Mountains. Its mapping went hand in hand with imaginary geographies. As indicated earlier, as a place name, the Altai entered into Muscovite writings and drawings in the late seventeenth century. European and Russian maps of Central Asia would casually register the place name, but the Petrine cartographers disregarded the fantastic Altai depictions by Semen Remezov.[296] Military and resource maps of this border area would represent neat and nameless hills.[297] However, from the mid-1730s through the late 1770s, the Altai disappeared off all Russian maps. This was hardly a matter of concern, as by that time the northern parts of the range were being firmly incorporated into Russia.

Although the Altai range lay in West Mongolian Zungharia, beyond Russia's political reach, the place was kept in view for geopolitical reasons. In the 1720s, Siberian servicemen took the first attempt at drawing the borderline between Russia and Zungharia across the Altai.[298] Dramatic events with the far-reaching implications took place in the mid-1750s, when the Chinese Qing dynasty almost eliminated West Mongolians.[299] In its aftermath, the Altai range became a point of departure in forming

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[292] *PSZ*, 1775, N. 14235; *Bakmeister, Kratkaia Rossiiskoi Imperii geografiia,* 419-20;
[293] Chebotarev, *Geograficheskoe i metodicheskoe opisanie Rossiiskoi Imperii,* 268-69, 507;
[294] Pallas, *Über die Beschaffenheit der Gebirge,* 30.
[295] Gumboldt, "O gornykh kriazhakh", 301-322.
[296] "Karta Kapitana Unkovskogo i geodezii uchenika Grigoriia Putipova"; Stralenberg, "Nova Descriptio Geographica", 1725; Kirilov, General'naia karta RI, 1734.
[297] Stralenberg, "Nova Descriptio Geographica"; Schmitt, Trescott, "Mappae Gubernii Sibiriensis continens Provincias Toboliensem et Jenisejensem"; Grekov, *Ocherki po istorii,* 250-52; Postnikov, *Stanovlenie rubezhei Rossii,* 94-95.
[298] Mel'nikov, "Reestr", 31-33.
[299] Perdue, *China Marches West*, pt. 5-7.

Russia's borderline with the Qing. The state border with China moved from somewhere in the vague Far East to the concrete location in West Siberia.

Whilst the Altai was absent on the maps, gaps of knowledge were filled with little help from ancient geographies. Vasilii Tatishchev pioneered the endeavor: he presented the Rocky Belt as the ancient Riphaeus, whereas the Altai stood for the Imaus; sometimes, it was the other way around.[300] In an effort to make sense of the non-Russian names, he identified the Altai as the similar sounding Alytau and Alatai; another Altai appeared in the south of the Rocky Belt.[301] Geographers played with the idea that the Altai stretched from the Irtysh River in Central Asia to the Amur River in East Siberia. It was widely believed that it reached Tibet and India.[302] The Altai figured as part of "the Siberian Border Mountains" as well as under a series of names: the Kolyvanskie, Belye (White), Snezhnye (Snowy), and the Teletskie Mountains.[303]

Two works brought the Altai mountain system to the maps. In 1771, P.-S. Pallas, the head of the Academic expedition, visited the Kolyvanskie silver factories at the foot of the Altai range. "The Map of the Altai Ore Mountains" by Pallas depicted man-made landscapes and resource locations around the Kolyvansko-Voskresenskie plants that constituted the Russian monarch's personal property.[304]

The second work appeared due to a more exotic reason. In 1768, a rare astronomic happening could be observed in East Siberia, and that of the transit of Venus across the face of the Sun. Celestial bodies barely affected the Russian cartography directly, however, this event entailed a special outcome. After making celestial observations, Captain Ivan Isleniev surveyed the newly conquered areas in on his way back. "The Map of the Irtysh Flowing in the Southern Parts of the Sibirskaia Guberniia and Kalmycks' Former Areas" (1777) indicates that this border territory posed a special geopolitical interest to the empire.[305] (Figure 10)

Several details illustrate how field surveys intermingled with imaginary geographies. The map contained several Altais located mostly beyond Russian political reach: a single peak, the Little Altai or the Khatai (*Maloi Altai, Khatai)*, the Grand Altai

[300] Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy*, 134; also, Rychkov, *Topografiia Orenburgskaia*, 34-35.
[301] Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy,* 52, 130, 153, 161, 164-65, 300.
[302] Polunin, *Novyi i polnyi slovar'*, 26; Pallas, *Über die Beschaffenheit der Gebirge,* 32-33.
[303] Renovants, *Mineralogicheskie, geologicheskie i drugie smeshannye izvestiia o Altaiskikh gorakh,* 130; Fal'k, *Zapiski puteshestviia*, 437; Gakman, *Kratkoe zemleopisanie,* §4, art.6; Pleshcheev, *Obozrenie Rossiiskoi imperii,* 13.
[304] Pallas, "Karte des Altaischen Erzgebuerges"; Cahen, *Les Cartes de la Sibirie*, 330.
[305] "Karta Irtysha v iuzhnoi chasti Sibirskoi gubernii i vladenii byvshikh ziungorskikh kalmykov"; Gnucheva, *Materialy dlia istorii ekspeditsii,* 110-112.

(*Bolshoi Altai*), the range Khaltai (*Khaltai*), and the White Mountains (*Belki Snezhnye*). The Little Altai remained under Russian control, whereas the Grand Altai posed part of China.[306] How can the rhymed Khaltai and Khatai be explained?

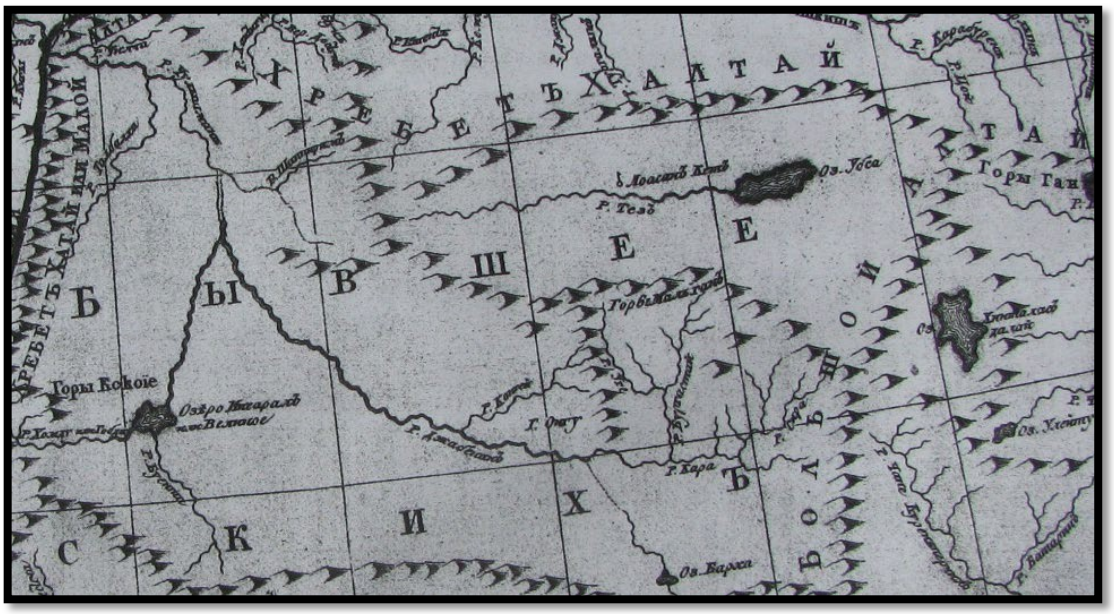

Figure 7. A detail from "The Map of the Irtysh and the Former Kalmyck Areas".

Obviously, Strahlenberg's map of 1725, served as a point of departure for Isleniev. Due to the difficulties in obtaining exact data, the false objects would often appear on maps. It seems that Strahlenberg produced the *Khaltai Montes* out of *Altai* and the Mongolian range *Khangai.* The latter had a great impact over Vasilii Tatishchev, who obviously interpreted *Khaltai* as *Khatai* due to the way the letters *l* and *t* appeared on Strahlenberg's map.[307] *Khaltai* vanished unnoticeably, while, paired with Little Altai, the imaginary Khatai remained on the maps until the mid-century.[308]

A standard depiction on the general maps indicated the signs of the state boundary _.._ that accurately divided the Altai range into two parts; one in Russia and another in the "Parts of the Chinese ownership".[309] Popular geographies used the Altai as an element in representing the territorial limits of the empire:

"Chudnyi krai! Cherez Altai, brosiv lokot' na Kitai,
Temia vprysnuv okeanom,
V Balt rebrom, plechom v Atlant,
V Polius lbom, piatoi v Balkany
Moshchnyi tianetsa gigant".[310]

[306] Laxmann, *Sibirische Briefe*, 30-31.
[307] Tatishchev, "Leksikon", 207.
[308] "General'naia karta Aziiatskoi Rossii" 1825; *Voenno-statisticheskoe obozrenie Rossiiskoi imperii,* 5.
[309] "Karta Kolyvanskogo Namestnichestva" (1800).
[310] Benediktov, "Tost" (1839), 124.

5.3. "The Great Mountain Game"

In the course of the nineteenth century, Central Asia remained in the focus of the political and diplomatic confrontation of the British and Russian empires. Driven by a spirit of further expansion, Russia advanced into the region with a fair amount of the Caucasian war experience.[311] By seeking to strengthen its positions, Russia ventured into the midst of the Great Game. This geopolitical endeavour produced plenty of academic studies and fictional books.[312] Perhaps, the very topography of Central Asia made the Great Game a particularly challenging enterprise for both rivals, whose principal focus was directed towards "the heart of Asia". Mountains played a central role in this undertaking. From classified reports and popular accounts to maps and pictures, they constituted an invisible backdrop to the British and Russian activities. Perhaps, the Great Game could have followed a less dramatic course, if Central Asia had been comprised steppes and flatlands.

In terms of the production of spatial knowledge, the Great Game posed the British-Russian mapping rivalry made by a succession of networks and individuals. They explored the region, travelled across hostile terrains, surveyed the remote areas while being in jeopardy for life and health. Both sides were well aware of each other's work; each voyage, and publication was registered and carefully studied. An obsessive desire to collect each and every snippet of information depended on geographical enquiry in the field. Both sides used the advantages of the knowledge making for keeping a power balance in Central Asia.[313]

Nevertheless, the Russian engagement should not be treated only in terms of the competition for the superiority with Britons. Russians' involvement posed one more step in the ongoing mountain mapping. What the Russian elites had been doing for at least two centuries – mapping the highlands beyond the immediate control – continued now as the Great Game. This chapter explores Russian presence in Central Asia as an endeavor on the spatial knowledge production. It argues that intellectual rivalry between the civil and military networks formed the Russian input in the Great Game. What were their exploration strategies? What role did mountains play as objects of knowledge for the civil researchers and military groups?

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[311] Muraviov, *Puteshestvie v Turkmeniu i Khivu*; Khanykov, *Opisanie Bukharskogo khanstva*; Bogoslovskii, "Zapiska o dolinakh Zeravshana".
[312] Hopkirk, *The Great Game. On secret Service in High Asia* and many others.
[313] Grombchevskii, *Otchet of poezdke v Kashgar*, 125.

5.3.1. Forty Years of the Epic Erdkunde

What was known about the Central Asian topographical order up until the mid-century? Neither Britons nor Russians were pioneers and producers of the regional knowledge. Two major works of the German scientists and university professors, Carl Ritters' "Geography of Asia" ("*Die Erdkunde* Asiens", the 1830s) and Alexander von Humboldt's "L'Asie Centrale" (1843), counted as the most authoritative reference for many learned generations.[314] Ritter and Humboldt created thousands of pages on the subject. The classic armchair scholar Ritter never traveled to Asia. Humboldt's star was always luckier: whilst on his Russian trip in 1829, he ventured into the Altai and reached the Russo-Chinese border, which actually was Northwest Mongolia.[315]

What kind of knowledge did these writings make? Unable to travel in the region, these and other scholars were constrained to process the available materials. Any source was used to expand knowledge about this part of the world. By critically scrutinizing the wide body of facts, Humboldt and Ritter attempted to create credible knowledge out of a great variety of sources: ancient geographies, Marco Polo's narrative, medieval reports, the Chinese writings, works of German scientists at the Russian service, diverse accounts, etc. All more and less reliable snippets of information were scrutinized either to reshape knowledge or prove a certain suggestion. Scientific minds speculated on the exact locations and directions of the major ranges of Central Asia. However, with such diverse sources at hand, even the most brilliant minds were too often constrained to the merely constructing of imaginary geographies.

The intense British and Russian engagement in Central Asia triggered a turn from theory to practice, from the armchair knowledge making towards work on-site. Direct mapping methods and the empirical encounter challenged the old styles of making geographies. As the streams of explorations clashed in the region, two learned communities were in the forefront: the British Royal Geographical Society, established in 1830, and the Imperial Russian Geographical Society (*Imperatorskoe Russkoe Geograficheskoe Obshchestvo*, further referred as the IRGO), formed in 1845.[316] The making of regional geographies moved from the German universities to the mobile British and Russian networks that used deceit and covert surveillance, combined regular

[314] There were more German geographers and thinkers on the agenda, e.g. Julius Claproth, but this chapter considers only these two scientists.
[315] Rose, *Mineralogisch-geognostische Reise nach dem Ural, dem Altai*, 602-6.
[316] *Russkoe Geograficheskoe obshchestvo, 150 let.*

measuring with the locals' input, etc. From the mid-century onward, the knowledge production resulted from first-hand experience and the geo- and topographical enquiry on site.

By then, Russians were well advanced in Central Asia. Search for better regional knowledge posed an exciting field for the competing spirit among the elites. No other undertaking could demonstrate the input of the civil networks better than "Zemlevedenie Azii", the Russian edition of Carl Ritter's "Geography of Asia". Piotr Semenov, who would become the IRGO vice-chairman and receive a prestigious extension "Tian-Shanskii", initiated the translation of this work. The project lasted four decades, between the 1850s and 1890s, and made over four thousand pages.

Formally, Semenov had to choose between Humboldt's "L'Asie Centrale" and Ritter's volumes. As our goal is neither to discuss the reasons of his decision nor the conceptual differences between two distinguished works, it will be plainly stated that in the end Semenov preferred Ritter's writing.

After finishing the first volume, Semenov, a graduate of the military school and the university of St. Petersburg, decided to update his education at the University of Berlin in 1853 - 1854. He attended the lectures of both scientists and had several meetings with them. It seems that even then his decision to translate Ritter's work remained a point of discussion. No doubt, Humboldt was an unshakeable icon and an authority for several generations of educated Russians. In his memoirs, Semenov recollected Humboldt's direct question: "Why Ritter?" Semenov explained elusively and diplomatically that Russians spoke French and German, and they were well familiar with Humboldt's works, whereas Ritter's volumes could be now fairly extended with new information.[317]

Contemporary geographers doubted credibility of Humboldt's many assumptions concerning Central Asia. He speculated the existence of four main meridian ranges in High Asia: the Himalayas, the Kunlun, the Tian Shan, and the Altai. In particular, he firmly claimed that there were volcanoes in the Tian Shan.[318] This and other wrong suggestions of the renowned scholar might have influenced Semenov's decision to turn to Ritter's work. More confessions could be found in the preface to the first volume of

[317] *Memuary P.P. Semenova. Detstvo i iunost', 1827-1855*, 258. Only the chapters regarding the Altai in Humboldt's "L'Asie Central" were published in Russian in 1915 as *"Aleksandr fon Gumboldt, Tsentral'naia Asiia". Tsentral'naia Aziia. Issledovaniia o tsepiakh gor i po sravnitel'noi klimatologii.*
[318] *Kartiny prirody s nauchnymi ob'iasneniami Aleksandra fon Gumboldta,* 57-80.

"Zemlevedenie Azii". Semenov politely compared Humboldt's "L'Asie Centrale" to a majestic, though delicate, building, whilst referring to Ritter's study as a stable and firmly fixed work.[319]

What is more important here is the imperial elites' keen interest in Ritter's writings that expressed a practical need to gather diverse information about Central Asia in the course of the expansion. Semenov's words confirm: "His (*Ritter's*) description of Asia is one complete volume of all scientific and geographical discoveries about a part of the world that is so important to us".[320]

Shortly after learning firsthand from the scientific luminaries, Piotr Semenov headed off to West Siberia and further to the Tian Shan with the IRGO mapping mission in 1856-1857.[321] One of his challenging tasks was, as he would confess later, to bring back the rock specimens that would demonstrate to Humboldt the non-existence of volcanoes in the Tian Shan range.[322] Upon his return, Semenov resumed translating and editing the rest of Ritter' volumes.

Due to the scarce IRGO finances, Semenov picked up five volumes on Central Asia and Siberia. Meanwhile, the project increased; there were ten substantial volumes in the end. Updated knowledge about the part of the world "that is so important to us" exceeded the size of the original, as more materials were added to each volume. The ongoing territorial extension transformed the Semenov-Ritter project into something larger than an ordinary translation of a geographical writing, as plenty of similar works was made available in the period. The volumes that appeared in the course of the unfolding expansion offered educated groups the updated and credible information about the newly conquered territories and beyond.

The course of the imperial expansion provided the ambitious editor with freedom and flexibility. Semenov held back a volume on West Siberia in order to add firsthand regional data from his co-editor Grigory Potanin, who participated in the expedition on demarcating the Russo-Chinese border in the early 1860s.[323]

This project required an involvement of the committed IRGO members, who meticulously improved, upgraded and extended spatial knowledge. At various stages, several civil co-editors were engaged into the enquiry. For the volumes on West Siberia,

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[319] *Zemlevedenie Azii Karla Rittera.* Predislovie perevodchika, IV, p. IX.
[320] *Zemlevedenie Azii Karla Rittera.* Predislovie perevodchika, I, p. I.
[321] Semenov, *Puteshestvie v Tian-Shan' v 1856-1857 godakh*.
[322] *Memuary P.P. Semenova. Detstvo i iunost', 1827-1855*, 258.
[323] *Zemlevedenie Azii Karla Rittera.* Predislovie perevodchika, IV, p. VIII.

it was researcher Grigorii Potanin, who actually had quit military service earlier; naturalist Germann von Petts and the exiled Pole Ivan Cherskii for East Siberia; diplomat and official Nikolai Khanykov for Iran; Vasilii Grigor'ev, Professor of Oriental studies, for East Turkestan and Afghanistan. Notable is Russian scholars' attempt to assess their intellectual input through the imaginary British eyes. Nikolai Khanykov claimed that: "Soon, the words terra incognita, that disfigure our maps of Asia, will completely disappear due to the intensive and praiseworthy activities of the British and our explorers."[324]

Ritter's works on Asia posed an enormous source of geographical reference, but its Russian version exceeded the original in content and size. The gigantic encyclopedia of several thousand pages posed a written memorial witness to the ongoing expansion. It literally followed colonization of Central Asia and Siberia as well as Russia's geopolitical interests that stretched beyond. The Semenov-Ritter work demonstrated the ability of the IRGO civil networks to produce knowledge as credible researchers. The involvement of the experienced explorers minimized the uncertainties of the frontier areas by correcting the deficiency of regional knowledge.

"Zemlevedenie Azii" completed a particular phase of Russian geographical work in the region and was of great contemporary importance. This endeavor brought new groups of the knowledge makers into the limelight. The outstanding publication appeared, whilst the Great Game was becoming more intense. It points to the bulk of regional knowledge that had been amassed through the efforts of the civil networks toward the end of the century. The intellectual involvement with Central Asia empowered Russia to increase spatial grip on the peripheries.

5.3.2. "We were recklessly driven to highlands"

The very nature of the ongoing expansion provided the Russian military with the incomparable advantages in the producing of spatial knowledge. Servicemen at the Caucasian, Orenburg, Siberian, and Turkestan border districts had wide opportunities to report about the unknown terrain firsthand. They actively engaged in the geographical exploration of the imperial edges and beyond. Army service endowed officers with physical mobility, whilst native Cossacks of the Buryat and Kalmyk

[324] *Iran Karla Rittera*, 639; also *Uchionye ekspeditsii, zanimavshiesia issledovaniem Turkestanskogo kraia*, 22.

background and locals served as their faithful interpreters. More important in terms of personal safety was that servicemen knew too well how to use firearms. After spending many years on the road, one of the most experienced military travelers, General Nikolai Przevalskii referred to several objects that empowered him to succeed in Central Asia as "three guides – money, a rifle, and a whip".[325] Money would come either from the IRGO or similar agencies, whereas the rest was at regular disposal in the Russian army.

The military elites positioned themselves as advanced pioneers of geographical exploration. How did they describe themselves? Here is one of the responds: "These dedicated people would take risks for themselves, but it would bring great success for the exploration".[326] Platon Chikhachev, a contemporary military traveler, plainly believed that in terms of the knowledge production Russia's natural calling was to act as an agent between East and West. He argued further that: "Nature deprived Britons of the precious flexibility and a capacity of appropriating different people' languages and traditions, but the same nature generously bestowed these abilities upon Russians."[327] While overestimating his countrymen, however, Chikhachev deliberately ignored the experience of the British intelligence officer Alexander Burns, who mastered the native tongues and successfully traveled covert through Afghanistan and Bukhara.[328]

Russian officers expressed their urge towards High Asia as "We were recklessly driven to highlands" (*Nas neuderzhimo tianulo v gory*).[329] However, the servicemen would also intensely seek the status of the credible knowledge makers. This led them to the IRGO, which could provide the institutional framework for their efforts. Their cooperation posed a deal between the renown agency and military networks. Officers' mobility afforded access to the yet unmapped areas and provided them with an entry to the respected agency. On the other hand, the IRGO produced a much more efficient mapping of Central Asia and maintained its high status while having the trustworthy members with scientific training on the field. In other words, through the frontier officers, the imperial society received a channel to increase its influence and get regular physical access to the remote areas.

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[325] Przevalskii, *Kak puteshestvovat po Tsentralnoi Azii,* 76.
[326] Grombchevskii, *Otchet of poezdke v Kashgar*, 125.
[327] Chikhachev, *Izsledovanie vershin Syr-Daryi,* 12.
[328] Burnes' travel took place in the early 1830s. Borns, *Puteshestvie v Bukharu*; Withers, "On Enightment's margins; geography, imperialism and mapping in Central Asia," 12-17.
[329] Roborovskii, *Predvaritelnyi otchet*, 18.

Due to the cooperation, trans-regional networks became evident among army and staff officers at the border districts. They will be referred further to as "military geographers", or the makers of the military facet of the Berg Discourse. Although their bulk belonged to the IRGO, some preferred to join similar intellectual societies.[330] These networks expanded gradually, as local branches of the learned societies emerged in the peripheries.[331]

From the mid-century onward, High Asia served as a playground for the border servicemen, who employed their energy for the knowledge making on the little known and not yet measured areas that lay out of civil researchers' reach. Whilst in the frontier service, they achieved the aims that very few civilians would barely attain otherwise. One of the aims was "to penetrate into Asia as deeply as possible".[332] Scientific expeditions required resources that very few civil agencies possessed. Very few adventurous individuals would take risks of exploring Central Asia on their own, as the equipment for the topographical survey was too costly.[333] An ordinary expedition required armed protection, enormous physical stamina for covering huge distances, material and moral resources, careful measures for carrying and concealing the expensive precision devices, mastery of local tongues, and flexible diplomacy in dealing with the locals. With the educated officers on-site, all above questions could be solved albeit not perfectly, but adequately.

Officers remained critical and suspicious towards having civil scientists on board plainly because the latter were hard to keep in control. Przevalskii would bluntly voice his concern: "a purely military group is the only way to ensure personal safety and to accomplish by sheer strength what is impossible to non-military expeditions. Civilians' presence triggers disorder and confusion".[334]

However, in terms of resource concerns, the most experienced military travelers needed civilians' advice and skills. Mineral prospecting remained on top of the expansionist agenda, and civil experts and naturalists would often join military

[330] Generals Kaulbars and Snesarev were the members of the Sredne-Aziatskoe Obshchestvo and Sredne-Aziatskii otdel Obshchestva Vostokovedeniia.
[331] Turkestanskii otdel Imper. Obshchestva Luibitelei Estestvoznania, Antropologii, Geografii; Sredne-Aziatskoe Obshchestvo Vostokovedeniia, etc.
[332] Semenov, *Pervaia poezdka na Tian-Shan'*, 22.
[333] In order to survive in harsh terrains, independent travelers needed access to resources and a symbolical protection of one of the empires: e.g. Sven Gedin, *V serdtse Pamira*.
[334] Przevalskii, *Kak puteshestvovat' po Tsentralnoi Azii,* 5.

expeditions in order to produce credible knowledge.[335] Occasionally, the servicemen would combine a geological and military background; some officers had a scientific and mathematic training: e.g. Bronislav Grombchevskii of Polish descent, a graduate of the Gornyi Institute in St. Petersburg, served at the Turkestan district and traveled to Kashgar, Kashmir, and the Pamir. In both capacities, such officers not only represented Russia's long-term ambitions in High Asia, but also brought their input into the making of mineral knowledge.

The mapping trips, or plain surveillance, were referred to in two main ways: as a civil term "*ekskursiia*" or as the military notion "*rekognostsirovka*", supplied with an extension "scientific" (*nauchnaia*).[336] Whatever these numerous trips were called, they served as an effective tool in balancing the knowledge making in Central Asia.

A particular trend emerged among border officers. It became a standard practice, a sort of fashion, to travel across the Pamir, the Kunlun, the ranges of Mongolia and Tibet and to have an extended account published afterwards. The servicemen produced a rich textual corpus that forms a rather underappreciated window into the knowledge making on Central Asia. In the course of furthering their career, they would take important posts in the General Staff and the Military Ministry.[337]

Roughly, two main mapping genres are discerned in the officers' reports, textually and stylistically. The first one, titled as "The Strategic Review of ..." or "The Military-Statistical Description of …" contained the geographical, historical and ethnographical descriptions of a region. The second genre was more practical, as it posed a ready-to-go guide in case of a military invasion. It included detailed topographical notes about roads and mountain passes, villages, wells and supply routes, the requirements of army provisioning, etc. Traveling Russians of the early modern period barely cared about local place names, whereas military geographers of late empire meticulously registered each native toponym. A detailed map was attached to each publication. However, some narratives offered an easy read of popular travel literature with the indispensable

[335] Venuikov, *Postupatelnoe dvizhenie Rossii,* 10; Przevalskii, *Kak puteshestvovat' po Tsentralnoi Azii,* 90; Kornilov, *Kashgariia*, 299-306; Kraevskii, **"**O poiske zolota v Turkestanskom voennom okruge**"**. Geologist Nikolai Severtsov partook in the expedition of the Military Ministry to Turkestan in 1865-1868; Karl Bogdanovich joined several trips of N. Przevalskii and M. Pevtsov in the 1880s.
[336] Grombchevskii, *Otchet of poezdke v Kashgar*, 125; Przevalskii, *Kak puteshestvovat po Tsentralnoi Azii,* 5.
[337] To name a few servicemen: A. Kuropatkin, L. Kornilov, A. Snesarev, N. Grodekov, A. Blaramberg.

elelments of colonial Orientalism: e.g. Colonel Grodekov's witty description of the trip to Afghanistan, and the account of his elephant ride in Herat.[338]

Where did these accounts appear? For a while, various IRGO periodicals served as the main channel. Place could be found in the military media: "Voennyi Sbornik", "Turkestanskii Sbornik", etc. Many narratives appeared plainly as single books. Yet in the early 1880s, the Military Scientific Committee of the General Staff (Voennyi Nauchnyi Komitet Generalnogo Shtaba) in St. Petersburg launched publishing a periodical under a long and neutral title "The collection of the Geographical, Topographical and Statistical Data on Asia" ("*Sbornik geograficheskikh, topograficheskikh i statisticheskikh svedenii po Azii*"). This top periodical would literally monopolize the publishing of the regional military reports in the period between 1883 and 1914. The military contribution to geographical work reveals the power-knowledge nexus that underpinned Russia's expansion in Central Asia.

The main purpose of the collection was announced as the following: "To facilitate the studying and further exploration of our Asian edges, and, in particular, China, Japan, Persia, Asian Turkey, Afghanistan, Bukhara, Khiva, etc." In terms of the target audience, it was not designed for popular use, but exclusively for the staff and those directly involved with the region. However, the upper military acknowledged the advantages of cooperating with civilians and diplomats: "the involvement of civil sources would complete knowledge about our possessions and neighbors."[339]

Initially, two series were planned: one would deal with Siberia and beyond; the second would handle the Caucasus and the adjacent countries. Along with the military matters, a wide range of the seemingly relevant topics was discussed, from Chinese religious prejudices to the ways of improving Russian trade in Asia. "Sbornik" widely published translations from the British and European sources about the areas of interest. Geographically, it covered a good half of Asia, from the Ottoman Empire to Manchuria, but the bulk of works handled Central Asia.

It is evident that through this channel the Military Scientific Committee established control over almost all forms of the military related information about the region. In an imagined competition for the superiority in the knowledge generation, "Sbornik" was second to none of all IRGO periodicals. The staff of the border districts in Omsk, Tiflis,

[338] Grodekov, *Cherez Afganistan*.
[339] Introduction to the first issue of the "Sbornik", no page indicated.

Tashkent, Novyi Margelan, etc., regularly published a wealth of materials about the adjacent countries. Many books continued appearing under the aegis of the IRGO, however. What they all manifested was a continuous need or, better, an urge to increase spatial grip on what laid beyond. Although vast information had been amassed, every author would lament about lacking data and emphasize how little was known about a region in question.

How did the rhetoric of the imperial explorers manifest itself? Obviously, they employed an imaginary link to Asia to make up the lack of Russia's overseas colonies. Pro-active on several continents, Britons made their way to the sources of the rivers in Africa, Australia, and Asia, whereas Russians had to constrain their efforts to the Oxus. Colonial parallels were apparent here; in a sense, Asian highlands substituted Russia's own Inner Africa.[340] In terms of imaginary geography, the area of interest was treated metaphorically as well. Several decades before Joseph Conrad's novel "The Heart of Darkness" was published, Mikhail Veniukov ably employed the metaphor of geographical darkness regarding "the heart of Asia".[341]

Along with providing regional knowledge, the servicemen expanded the symbolic limits of the empire by naming various peaks after the ruling dynasty.[342] Moreover, the Romanovs' faithful subjects attempted to re-create Holy Rus' in the midst of Asia. In particular, the Altyn-Tagh range in North West China was burdened with the Russian nationalistic elements.[343]

While undertaking the mapping work, the servicemen had to fulfill one more task. Backward Asians could never appreciate high goals that they persisted; the travelers always remained in the focus of the locals' annoying attention and bore a burden of looking suspicious. To the Russian officers' disappointment, however, even some of the educated countrymen grasped neither the meaning of their hard journeys nor the expenses they caused. At home, military travelers confronted inconvenient questions regarding the purpose of the costly trips. Vsevolod Roborovskii, the IRGO member and one of the closest allies of Przevalskii, had to patiently explain to the attendants of an IRGO event by referring to the abstract "aims of the fatherland", "the peaceful wealth

[340] *Zemlevedenie Azii Karla Rittera.* Predislovie perevodchika, II, p. IV.
[341] Veniukov, *O Pamire i verkhoviakh Amu-Dar'i,* 1.
[342] Kaulbars named several peaks Petrovskaia, Ekaterininskaia, Nikolaevskaia, etc. However, it was a subject of approval by the district staff. Kaulbars, *Materialy po geografii Tian-Shania*, 19, 21, 27, 44.
[343] **"**The Russkii and Moskovskii range, the Aleksandr-the-Third range, the Tsar-Resquer, the Monomakh-Cap Mountain. Humboldt, Ritter, Przevalskii and Semenov, were not left in oblivion either. "Karta Aziatskoi Rossii. Sostavlena po noveishim svedeniiam polkovnikom Il'inym**"**.

of our country" and "the development of trade and industry on our Asian peripheries.[344] Paradoxically, valuable data that the military amassed for the sake of sheer knowledge facilitated neither Russia's "peaceful wealth" nor a rapid rise of peripheral economics. The traveling officers were mostly concerned with publishing their works, whereas the question of how to make pragmatic use of materials was a matter of second concern.

Although Platon Chikhachev believed that in terms of the physiological features Russians had more advantages in Asia than Britons, of all explorers, only those of the non-Russian background successfully assimilated into alien environment and travelled disguised across Asia. Those were Chokan Valikhanov as a Bukharian merchant to Kashgar and Gombozhap Tsebrikov as a Buddhist pilgrim to Tibet.[345] In these natives, the tsarist empire had its own Asian pundits. However, the bulk of the military expeditions traveled concealing neither their uniform nor identity.

"The Russian Mountain Drive" occurred in the same time with the broad perception of the Alpine aesthetics. Modern authors widely used tropes and clichees in representing the snow-capped ranges of the Caucasus and the Altai. On the contrary, it is surprizing to see how reluctantly the military explorers would resort to the Sublime language in their descriptions. Whilst in front of the highest elevations of the world, they remained immune to the spell of the Sublime. The servicemen had a purely instrumentalist view and duly registered topographical details of what they actually saw. Sheer pragmatics replaced the lack of aesthetic excitement: "We expected a bunch of diverse and enticing scientific trophies in highlands".[346] Furthermore, the arrival of mass photography would make the publications more entertaining.[347] The pictures captured officers in front of the majestic ranges or mounted on horses or more exotic yaks on the road.

Elites of two empires clashed and mapped Central Asia in what is known now as the Great Game. The direct involvement with the region marked the end of the arm-chair geographies. For the ambitious networks, the region served as a playground to show off their intellectual capacities in the making of credible knowledge. So far, High Asia remained a target of the keen interest and imaginary property of the elites. However, Russia's primary focus was on the territorial expansion and the increasing

[344] Roboroskii, *Ekskursii po Tibetu*, 326.
[345] Valikhanov, *Collected Works*; Tsybikov, *Buddist-palomnik u sviatyn' Tibeta*.
[346] Roboroskii, *Predvaritelnyi otchet*, 18; Bogdanovich, *Geologicheskie issledovaniia v Vostochnom Turkestane*, pt. 2, 167.
[347] One of the vivid examples in: Lastochkin, *Vostochnyi Turkestan. Kashgariia.*

grip over the newly conquered areas and far beyond. The engagement in "the Great Mountain Game" brought the professional networks to the heights of influence in the regional knowledge making. Throughout interaction and cooperation, servicemen and civil scientists retained a strong sense of group identity. United by the imperial expansion, they pursued the goals that overrode sectional concerns. Their concerted efforts directed to "the aims of the fatherland" and "peaceful wealth of our country" empowered Russia to advance deeply into Central Asia.

5.4. The Uncertainties of the Spatial Experience

Through the mountains, the territorial expansion provided the Other to the Russian geographical imagination. Along with the steppe, the mountain terrains were highly instrumental to empire building.[348] Mountains were converted to physical and imaginary sites in a variety of imperial projects. Different groups made distinct mountain experiences through their material and intellectual practices. How can their multi-voiced experience be differentiated? What shaped their attitudes to these terrains? How did public discourses appropriate mountain spaces?

Mountains secured a niche within the geographical imagination of the officials and naturalists. In the North Caucasus and Central Asia, mountains provided areas for the potential territorial extension. They formed an obstacle for the travelers, and a temporary shelter from persecutions for religious dissidents. As for the general public, European cultural trends provided for the imaginary tools of shaping mountain spaces, whilst the references to the Sublime aesthetics was used as a tool of improving their cultural status. The list can be extended, as various groups differently treated the mountains in their experience.

This section argues that instrumentality and ambivalence were two key modalities through which mountains came to be represented in popular geographies. The multi-dimensional attitude of particular groups to mountain spaces depended on their position within the imperial power structure. Several key moments will be highlighted in how different groups constructed this landscape. Unlike the naturalists and experts, ordinary people were slow in the cultural appropriating of the terrains.

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[348] Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field. Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*.

To a large extent, the historical development of cultural climate and landscape imagery determined the ways of seeing and mapping the natural areas.[349] Prior to the Alpine aesthetics, mountains were neither familiarized nor exoticized, but interpreted through a filter of contemporary culture. The landscape descriptions were scarce; when travelers and colonizers directed their gaze toward the mountains, they equally recognized a staple of hay (*kamenaia sopka podobna iakoby stog*) in the ranges on Asia and the Kamchatka peninsula.[350] Deeply focused on minerals, rational naturalists barely took notice of the mountains' appearance.[351]

Who made visual experiences of this landscape in the period? A necessary journey to the margins of the empire was required to experience the scene directly. However, before the conquest of the Caucasus, neither a destiny nor a need would bring an average poet into the peripheries to see the alpine terrains, "*verkhi vysokikh gor*". The attempted representation of the never seen landscape by Vasilii Trediakovskii sounded as awkward as "*uzh po khrebtam kholmisty gory*".[352]

The attempts to introduce mountains into the Russian literature occurred not often, for the proper cultural tools required for the description were on the way to appear. Scientist Mikhail Lomonosov, the only exception to the contemporary trends, occasionally resorted to mountains in his poetic works. Before the Sublime aesthetics infected a mode of seeing the highlands, imperial poetry loosely rhymed each known range with a particular kind of metal or mineral.[353] Only after Nikolai Karamzin's "The Letters of the Russian Traveler" appeared by the turn of the century, tastes changed in appreciation of mountain spaces that made their way into the public imaginations.[354]

European discourses changed the valence of mountains that acquired a new meaning for the educated groups. The perception of mountains within the European context "normalized" this scene in the elites' imagination. Once a neutral site, they exerted fascination on the broad public groups. As soon as landscape aesthetics seized imperial high culture, its irresistible impact shaped the imagining of mountains to such a degree that people could see things that did not exist.[355]

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[349] One of the central topics in: Short, *Imagined country. Environment, culture and society.*
[350] *ZRP,* 257; Unkovskii, entry from October 19, 1722.
[351] Leman, *Opyt general'noi orografii*; Aleksandrovskaia, *Stanovlenie geograficheskoi nauki*, 72-74.
[352] Trediakovskii, "Veshnee teplo" (1756), 742.
[353] Zavalishin, *Sokrashchennoe zemleopisanie Rossiiskago gosudarstva, sochinennoe v stikhakh,* 21-23.
[354] Karamzin, *Pis'ma russkogo puteshestvennika*.
[355] Tuan, *Topophilia*, 226.

European aesthetics and Romanticism provided a ready formula for visualizing the Caucasus and its native inhabitants.[356] The Sublime optic treated the region as an exemplary mountainous site of the Russian empire and fitted it into the cultural frame.[357] The highland images entered into writers and artists' imagination. The most talented men of letters chose the terrains as a picturesque setting of their works and imagined the highlands in abundant romantic detail. The broad public would draw inspiration from the exotic topographical scene.

The idea of having mountains somewhere in the peripheries deepened the sense of imperial glory and demonstrated Russia's landscape diversity to the educated groups in the same way as studying pictures of different ethnicities of the realm. As a point of pride, mountains served as a general-purpose framework for making sense of imperial space. This scene appeared natural and permanent in the popular mind to such an extent that the schoolbooks casually taught about the physical elevations serving a political purpose by bringing together tribes that inhabit Russia.[358] Seas served the same purpose of giving a sense of the country's territorial size. Although both landscapes gave the empire a comprehensible framework in popular geographies, sea was worthless in terms of gaining material profits.

The ongoing expansion and the lively engagement with the mountains made imperial elites rethink and redefine their spatial identities. When they did so, it turned out that they preferred to reconnect to the topographical framework of central Russia. The invisible presence of the looming ranges made them re-establish a closer identification with the flat heartlands. Despite having an empire of multiple landscapes, the elites constructed their spatial identity on the basic framework of the national terrain.[359] This reveals a gap in imperial and national in their understanding of space. Mountains had low chances to become part of national imagination. Flatlands and steppe stood for proper Russia, whereas mountain ranges represented the Empire and its peripheries.[360]

As such, mountains offered great symbolic means for nationalist manipulation; e.g. the newly conquered Tian Shan was considered an extension of Russian national

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[356] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire. Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*; Ram, *The Imperial Sublime. A Russian Poetics of Empire.*
[357] *Tolkovyi slovar' Zhivogo Velikorusskogo Iazyka*, 376.
[358] *Podrobnyi konspekt po geografii Rossiiskoi imperii*, 9.
[359] Ely, *This Meager Nature. Landscape and national Identity in Imperial Russia.*
[36]8 Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field. Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe*.

space.[361] Some authors would stretch the empire far beyond its actual border down to the Himalayas.[362] Nationalist mental maps treated the mountains as "the gigantic walls" and "the protective barriers of the empire".[363] Depending on the agenda, the metaphorical walls could be turned to the places of interaction, too.[364]

What were particular forms of dissemination of mountains' representation in the period? In contemporary European cultures, they were imagined in a wide variety of ways; diverse forms of writing, mapping, charting, panoramas, and painting were employed.[365] Mountain spaces formed an indispensable backdrop in the British colonial painting.[366] To the young North American republic, mountains embodied the idea of freedom and independence.[367]

In spite of powerful iconographic possibilities that this scene possessed, Russian artists did not rush to depict this landscape. Imperial literature gained unique topographical experience in the Caucasus, but the inattention of the visual arts to the mountains was apparent. The members of the Russian Academy of Arts preferred the domesticated Mediterranean elevations instead.[368] The ranges of the Caucasus, the Crimea and Siberia would occasionally appear on the canvases.[369] If treated as a branch of painting, the heraldic iconography was ahead in representing mountains. As early as in the 1840s, the mountain peaks were seen on the heraldic depictions of the peripheral regions.[370] However, when mass photography appeared in the late century, it became the major channel of visualizing the mountains.

In the meantime, European elites continued conquering the Alps and other ranges. In 1857, the English Alpine Club was formed, and dozens of similar establishments appeared throughout Europe.[371] Mountains mattered as a compelling goal for Russian elites, too. They enthusiastically appropriated a new cultural habit, whilst the Russian Mountain Society (*Russkoe Gornoe Obshchestvo*) was established in 1900s.[372]

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[361] *Rech' vitse-predsedatelia IRGO Semenova na chrezvychainom sobranii Obshchestva*, 2.
[362] Vitevskii, *I.I.Nepuiev i Orenburgskii krai*, I.
[363] Babkov, *Vospominaniia o moei sluzhbe,* 160; Budilovich, *Mozhet li Rossia otdat' inorodtsam,* 11.
[364] *Rech' vitse-predsedatelia IRGO Semenova po povodu triokhsotletiia Sibiri*, 28.
[365] Seitz, *Wo Europa den Himmel berührt*.
[366] Stafford, *Voyages into Substance*. Ch. 2. "The Natural Masterpiece", 59-124.
[367] Miller, *The Empire of the Eye. Landscape representation and American Cultural Politics.*
[368] Fiodorov-Davydov, *Russkii peizazh.*
[369] Tokarev, *Khudozhniki Sibiri;* Ely, *"*Personal and Imperial*",* 100-103.
[370] Vinkler von, *Gerby gorodov, gubernii i posadov Rossiiskoi imperii,* XXII-III.
[371] Beattie, *The Alps; Ring, How the English Made the Alps,* 85.
[372] See the chapter *"*Zu den Gipfeln des Zarenreiches: Russlaendische Bergvereine, 1890-1914" in Maurer, *Wege zum Pik Stalin. Sowjetische Alpinisten, 1928-1953.*

The recent fashion added a new modality to the attitude to this landscape. More important is its impact on the meaning of "mountain" (gora/gornyi). As discussed earlier, by the mid-eighteenth century, it had been invested with the purely geological and mining semantics. Times changed, as more mountain areas were joined to the empire and entered into popular geographies. More groups came into contact with the terrains and furnished the notion with the purely topographical meanings. The meanings of the mountain relief gradually prevailed in gora/gornyi. This paradigm had to be rebalanced in order to adapt to the cultural changes that were taking place.

The opening speech of Alexandr von Meck, the society's first chairman, illustrates this important linguistic event. His confession reveals the difficulties in picking up the right reference: "for we do not have the Alps, and we cannot call ourselves "alpine"" ("*ibo Alp u nas net, i potomu "alpiiskim" my sebia nazvat ne mozhem"*).[373] What prevented the founding fathers to resort to a more influential notion and title it simply "the Russian Alpine Society", as the creators of a similar club did several decades ago?[374] His paradoxical hesitation offers some glimpses into the ongoing changes: gora'*s* mining meanings were gradually giving way to the relief semantics. Thus, the Alpine aesthetic provided another shift that eclipsed the mining meanings of *gornyi*. Imaginary control over the mountain knowledge making was slightly shifting from the narrow circles toward the broader public groups.

The same sense of ambivalence was evident at the heart of lower groups' attitude to the mountain terrains. The cultural gap kept their social geographies immune to the elites' cultural trends. However, the colonization of the imperial peripheries provided wide opportunities for expanding non-elite Russians' geographical imaginations.

The probability of confronting the mountains came with either the tsar's favor or penalty as in the pre-Petrine times. Persecuted religious groups (Old Believers, Molokane, Khlysty) were forced to settle in the mountainous peripheries.[375] Since the mid-eighteenth century, several groups of Old Believers landed in the Altai valleys, the buffer zone between Russia and China.[376] Joined by runaway state peasants from the Kolyvanskie mining factories, the Rock people (*kamenshchiki*) considered it a temporary station on the way to a better life by mapping it as the Promised Land, or the

[373] "Prilozhenie k protokolu Sobraniia Russkogo Gornogo Obshchstva", 96.
[374] Mekk, "Al'piiskie kluby i Russkoe gornoe obshchestvo", 10-17.
[375] Breyfogle, *Heretics and Colonizers*
[376] Golubev, *Altai. Istoriko-Statisticheskii sbornik,* 118-121; Znamenski; "The "ethic of empire" on the Siberian borderland: the peculiar case of the "rock people, 1791-1878", 106-128.

Land of White Waters" (*Belovod'e*).[377] Although alien, mountain space meant freedom from religious persecutions. Despite confronting the natives and hostile environment, these marginal people treated the mountains as their temporary home.

The territorial growth added one mountain region after another, but it barely affected daily life of ordinary peasants in the Russian heartlands. However, the Great Settlement extended their geographies. Seeing Siberian highlands, in particular, the Altai range would pose a true revelation to them, the same way as to early modern Muscovites. The authors of the popular accounts for the settlers were concerned about how to properly prepare peasants for a new experience that could result in a shock:

> "On your way from Barnaul to Biisk, when you go across the flatland, you will get to notice something that resembles dense blue clouds on the sky edge. Then you will see that these are not clouds, but mountains. The Altai range is very tall, and its ranges are very broad".[378]

The experts repeatedly emphasized how difficult it was to Central Russians to grow accustomed to the Altai district. Peasants painstakingly avoided them, and, once settled in the mountains, they would abandon it sooner or later for the sake of the flatter parts of the region. As official Alexander Kaufman indicated, they felt "*privolnee, rodnee*" there.[379] However, many would stick to the mountain valleys and drove away the natives.

It is evident that lower culture felt no need to replace comfortable flatlands with dangerous highlands. The topographical frameworks of Russian folksongs habitually accommodated hayfields, swamps, and rivers.[380] Songs would refer to a birch standing on the field ("*vo pole berezka stoiala*") as hundreds of years ago.

The gap between upper and lower cultures was evident in the vocabularies. New experience did not change the language of lower groups. Their responses to mountains reveal a perplexing multiplicity that can be placed into three main categories. It meant *what* (local climate conditions, a landscape, a mine, a mansion of local nobles, a roof of a house, a marriage celebration after a church ceremony), *who* (miners, youth gatherings, a newly wedded couple, a bride's relatives), and *how* (high, by foot).[381] The

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[377] Iadrintsev, "Raskolnich'i obshchiny na granite s Kitaia", 36. White stood for purity, water signified a contrary landscape: an isle, a land surface. Chistov, *Russkie sotsial'no-utopicheskie legendy*, 239-90. At the other edge of the country, in the North Caucasus, another group of Old Believers was in search of "the town of Ignat", their version of the Promised Land. Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire. The Terek Cossacks and the North Caucasus Frontier,* 186.
[378] *Rasskazy o Zapadnoi Sibiri, ili o guberniiakh Tobol'skoi i Tomskoi,* 37.
[379] Kaufman, *Pereselenie i kolonizatsiia*, 238.
[380] A topographical selection from *Sto russkikh narodnykh pesen*.
[381] Dal', *Poslovitsy russkogo naroda,* 147*,* 154, 276; *Slovar' russk. narodnykh govorov*, 16-18; 48-50.

regional versions of the offensive language provide a striking example: peasants actually swore by referring to mountains.[382] A very familiar and widespread form of 'othering' can be recognized here. This range of the contrary and incoherent meanings indicates that the cultural Other was burdened with the broad and incoherent meanings. This confirms the suggestion that mountains remained evocatively alien to Russians.

What brought together the geographical imaginations of the elite and lower groups was their ambivalent and instrumental attitude toward the mountains. A range of late imperial projects brought wider groups into contact with the mountain terrains by reducing physical and mental distances to this scene: public access to mineral springs and spas of the Caucasus, the construction of the Trans-Siberian railroad, mountaineering, mass photography, and etc. However, mountains remained the Other to educated and non-educated Russians, as Piotr Semenov-Tian-Shanskii confessed:

> "Whilst traveling hundreds and even thousands versts across the Russian black soil areas in my childhood and adolescence, I was unable to imagine what a mountain looked like, since I saw mountains only on the pictures and treated them as fanciful images, not as a piece of reality. What our Great-Russian folk perceived as mountains, were, on one hand, a descending into ravines and slopes, washed either by streams or by spring brooks on our broad Sarmatia flatland, and, on the other, an ascending on the opposite side."[383]

* * * * *

The mountains posed one of the most successful imperial acquisitions. They were encountered, imagined, and thoroughly colonized through a wide range of actions and experiences. Various groups constructed the meanings of mountain spaces through the practices of contact and inquiry from which they made certain forms of knowledge. The basic tendency was already evident in the early modern period. The Russian perception of mountains continually shifted between ambivalence and instrumentality. This combination formed a discursive thread that brought together spatial imaginations of different groups. In late imperial culture, the mountains tended to a multidimensional reading. Under the impact of larger European trends, the elites deployed this landscape for implementing their cultural agenda. To lower groups, natural elevations continued to be what they had been in the early modern period: an abstract void that can be filled with any meaning. Though mountains no longer evoked a sense of natural threat, Russians only rehashed their earlier attitudes and continued treating these terrains as

[382] There were about a dozen of swear wordings: *Slovar' russkikh narodnykh govorov*, 17-18.
[383] Semenov-Tian-Shanskii, *Puteshestvie v Tian-Shan,* 111.

the Other scene. This basic framework accommodated the principal ways of how various imperial groups handled mountain spaces in their imaginations.

Closing Remarks for Part One

Before moving to our case study, several closing remarks for this part are in order. One of the consequences of Russia's becoming an empire was the encounter and incorporation of diverse landscapes. Along with providing the unprecedented experience and opportunities, mountains played a critically productive role in the construction of the Romanov's realm.

This topographical scene represents a fertile discursive terrain for our exploration of power relations, modernity, and the knowledge making. By treating the Berg Discourse as a highly specialized and distinctive phenomenon that has been evolving since late Muscovite period, this part sought a new theoretical framework to understand the facets of spatial modernity. An attempt was made to capture the discourse at work in the making of the tsarist realm, as it was essential to the Russian engagement with colonial areas and resources. Each chapter has drawn our attention to different strands of discourse and specific ways in which it evolved.

We did not intend to provide a definite coverage of the discourse, as this phenomenon resists easy explanation. In its widest possible sense, it defies any single scholarly categorization and demands a multi-analysis, for a single perspective may isolate a certain meaningful dimension of discourse. Knowing this, the chapters made no claim to offer a total view of this heavily burdened notion. An attempt was made to address the inner structures rather than to consider the discourse in terms of an abstract phenomenon that evolved out there. Though we came up with a few somewhat overlapping definitions, there is little point in pursuing the discourse for the sake of pinning it down once and for all. Rather, an attempt was made to reshape the definitions of the discourse and reconfigure its boundaries.

The Berg Discourse incorporated modern ways of governing space, resources, and people. These ways of spatial thinking were crucial to Russia's emergence as a mighty empire and in implementing its expansionist agenda. Diverse structural layers illustrate the breadth and depth of the discourse. Differentially spread across the state branches and places of empire, it has sponged up an unusual variety of power modalities that fueled and affirmed other state discourses of colonization and administrative rule. The

dominant presence of discourse in power patterns was inseparable from the rise of the Romanovs' crown.

A few points can be made here. First, the notion of the modern Berg Discourse advances our discussion of the far-reaching changes in the Russian attitudes to space without loosing touch with the locale and specific character of these changes. Ever evolving, the discourse was socially constructed and temporally specific in various periods. The discourse was closely linked to the central and regional institutions. The chapters suggested that it was not divorced from social practices and could be physically located; it occurred in actual places (the governmental agencies, the voevodas' offices, on early colonizers' encounter with the natives) and in knowledge making sites (the Kamchatka expeditions, "The Gornyi Zhurnal"). Discourse easily bridged the gaps between center and periphery. Not confided to the metropolis alone, this form of spatial power connected non-Russian peripheries and urban locations into complex imperial spaces.

Second, the Berg Discourse involved a variety of practices, institutions, and languages. This implies a range of research modes because such discourses circulated over space and time in different forms. In relation to modernity, it was explored in terms of the spatial knowledge production. Such an approach does not exhaust its potential, however. The relationships between forms of power and knowledge lie at the heart of the discourse, and that matters in making sense of hybrid ways of the knowledge generation. Early knowledge was constructed in a variety of the informal sites rather than in strictly disciplinary spaces. Things changed with the arrival of the professional networks, and that indicated the movements towards the institutionalized knowledge production. This part also attempted to track particular moments of people, ideas, and experiences that revolved around the discourse.

It is the third point here that the interacting and sometimes competing networks constructed the Berg Discourse as an intellectual product. These knowledgeable trans-regional groups had access to power and were on the frontline of empire building. Access to spatial power allowed them to exert an influence far beyond their reach. By mapping and shaping colonial spaces in a way that proved the most productive for their group agenda, the power networks crossed and exchanged empire wide. Through their efforts, mountains were turned to important discursive terrains, across which the struggle between the influential networks unfolded. The makers and agents of the discourse developed some of the closest connections that

existed between Russia's administrative, military, and academic networks. Thus, their agendas and motives filled and fueled the Berg Discourse.

Finally, what was the place of the mountains in the empire of multiple ethnicities, religions, and landscapes? Did Russians attain final supremacy over these terrains and people in the course of the expansion? Although mountains remained the cultural Other in many ways, it is evident that they were highly instrumental and indispensable to the imperial vision. This landscape attested to the extent and magnitude of the Romanovs' realm and contributed to the wealth of its rulers. By mapping and remapping mountains as physical and imaginary spaces, Russians treated these terrains as a testing ground for their empire building energy and imagination.

PART TWO

The Limits of Mapping the Altai in Imperial and Popular Geographies

CHAPTER SIX

"DRAW AN EMPTY CIRCLE": THE MAKING OF THE ALTAI REGION (1720s-1890s)

Earlier, we have discussed the Russian cartographic mapping of the Altai range that started in the late seventeenth century. This chapter adds another layer of mapping into a single framework by considering the less known geographical conditions that gave a rise to the place. In many ways, it attempts to backtrack from the familiar ways of seeing the region and discover it anew through the lens of the Berg Discourse.

Administrative status is the second angle from which to evaluate the imperial constructing of this place. This chapter explores why the district took the shape it did in a particular location and not somewhere else, and this 'why' is vital in explanations of what happened to the place afterwards. The analysis addresses three basic concerns: What made a vague borderland into a distinct region and how was it carried out? Why was this area invested with a separate identity? How successful was the project in the end?

The administrative mapping of the Altai district was deeply implicated in larger strategies of the central and regional ruling groups. Resource power played a major role in defining imperial presence here, whereas external forces have been crucial to the formation of the site.[384] At the broadest level, the Altaiskie (Kolyvanskie) factories posed one of the earliest cases at resource regionalization of the country. The chapter provides a series of the detailed readings of events that (re)mapped and (re)shaped the plants, which originally formed a chunk of geographical space. Aimed at piecing the spatial mosaics together, it explores how the district took shape in the ruling elites' minds since the early eighteenth century.

The chapter evolves around a question of how the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie plants became the Altai mining district. It outlines and engages the multiple factors behind the different stages of the region making. A series of the transformations that made private factories into a huge economic region demonstrates the plasticity and versatility of the Berg Discourse and its ability to adopt diverse shifting geographies

[384] Giddens, *Konsequenzen der Moderne,* 30-31.

and different models of governance.[385] That makes the Altai a fruitful site from which to think about imperial rule, as the borders between various dimensions of the Berg Discourse became blurred in this case.

The concept of changing geographies suggested by Donald Meinig is of a particular importance for our case. It implies strategies of territorial conquest, spatial control and assessment of colonial areas. The idea of changing geographies points to the dynamic character of the expansion and diverse challenges it entailed.[386] However, in terms of resource colonization, these geographies were copied and reproduced locally, whereas regional versions had an impact on larger power strategies. The Altai region poses an exemplary case for examining the interactions and conflicts of shifting geographies. Here, they shaped and sharpened power relations and decision-making moments of the ruling groups.[387]

The meta-narrative that dominates academic and popular accounts treats the emergence of the region as an unproblematic event. In order to shake it off, the chapter starts with a gaze on a blank space. Further on, the perspective of changing geographies examines the site through a different lens. The region saw varied manners of resource governing that reflected the complexity of Russia's spatial order. Various ways and terms of the territorial organization defined the site. Initially, it posed as a cluster of mines and factories; then, it functioned as an administrative oblast', a province, a namestnichestvo, a mining district, and, finally, a mining oblast'. Each way formed a certain approach to the managing and imagining the site.

This chapter interpretes the region-making case here as a series of the incoherent, fractured and fissured process that spanned over a century and a half. The major levels of the administrative mapping unfolded in three periods:

(1) Since the 1720s on, an undifferentiated borderland was identified as a major area of Russian economic interests;

(2) From the 1747 through the 1800s, the central and regional power groups transformed the area into a particular site and invested it with a specific identity;

(3) In the period from the 1810s to the 1840s, the factories with a long and inconvenient title and without a certain territorial status and borders became a large economic region with a short and catchy name.

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[385] Nash, “Historical Geographies of Modernity”, 221.
[386] Meinig, “Geographical analysis of imperial expansion”, 71-78.
[387] See “geography of power” in: Remnev, *Rossiia Dal'nego Vostoka. Imperskie geografii vlasti*.

The chapter starts with outlining the early colonization processes that evolved around the site. At first, it traces how the private mining plants were brought within the government's orbit. The means and tools of the mineral region implementing will be discussed; the events and processes that culminated in the emergence of the district will be highlighted. Further, it charts a breathtaking boost from a copper mine to a huge administrative mega-region (*namestnichestvo*) that took up a good half of western Siberia. How consistent was the resource region making policy? What alternatives might have been there to the region-making processes? Several moments will be examined that resulted in ascribing the plants a status of the mining district.

Located at the edge of the country, the Altai region became a site of the intense empire-building processes, albeit it witnessed neither military victories nor building new cities. The shine of imperial glory became apparent in full flesh in this corner of the realm, as power over resources defined the mounting colonization and the making of the place. The arrival of the Russian empire manifested itself in the extensive resource exploitation and irreversible transformations of space and landscape.

6. 1. The Short-Lived Demidovland (1720s - 1746)

The story of the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie factories is well known.[388] In the early 1720s, rumors about old copper mines between the upper Irtysh and Ob Rivers that had been previously exploited by the earlier inhabitants of Siberia reached the ear of the developer Akinfii Demidov (1678-1745). His father Nikita Demidov, the influential owner of the iron factories in central Russia, was connected to the emperor Peter and his efforts to establish the metallurgical industry in the country. As one of the most affluent entrepreneurs of the time, Akinfii Demidov possessed huge real property in central Russia along with the mining plants in West Siberia.[389]

Demidov quickly assessed the value of potential resources in the buffer zone: copper was of high quality and charcoal abundant. Not frightened by the dangerous presence of the West Mongolian Zunghars, he started mapping the areas originally inhabited by the *Teleuts*, the Turkic speaking tribes and vassals to the Zunghar Khan. This nomadic confederation was the only geopolitical impediment for the Russian

[388] German, *Sochinenia o Sibirskikh rudnikakh i zavodakh,* pt. 2; Fal'k, *Zapiski puteshestviia*, 435-511; Rozhkov, "Akinfii Nikitich Demidov na svoikh zavodakh"; Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri*, 36-59.
[389] Spasskii, *Zhizneopisanie Demidova*; Slovtsov, *Istorisheskoe obozrenie Sibiri,* 65-69.

expansion in the area that would soon be added to southwestern Siberia. From the early decades on, Russians contested the extracting of the fur tribute from the Teleuts. In the early 1710s, the Khan relocated most of his Teleut vassals to the south of the Zunghar state. Since then, Russians erected military outposts; early colonists started spreading in the area. Too involved with the Chinese war threats, the Zunghars would only periodically attack the Russian forts.[390]

With permission granted by the Berg-College, Demidov established his first metallurgical factory in 1726. Three years later, the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie factory started producing copper. Afterwards, Demidov set up the Barnaulskii and Shulbinskii plants. This stretch of the borderland lacked an all-encompassing toponym and was known only by the names of the first plant. The inconvenient title "Kolyvano-Voskresenskie" referred to the name of the copper mine and to the religious connotations of Sunday, the day, when, according to the legend, the copper reserves were apparently discovered. The long name served as an overarching label for a cluster of mines and factories that were situated a few hundred versts from each other. The reference functioned well because the early term "factories" (*zavody*) encapsulated a secondary territorial meaning: it stood for an area where certain activities were conducted.[391]

The Commerce-College in St. Petersburg supervised Demidov's activities.[392] The deficiency in human resources was solved by forced peasant migration from West Siberia. In order to protect his factories from the Zunghars, Demidov was allowed to build a fortified outpost with cannons on his own expense.[393]

Imperial administration was well updated about Demidov's progress. In 1734, the empress Anna Ioanovna instructed Vasilii Tatishchev, the senior official at the Siberian plants, to assess these factories in order to take them over for "Our benefit" (*dlia pol'zy nashei*), if necessary.[394] In the same year, the Kolyvanskie factories saw a change of the owner. A year later, however, Demidov returned his plants.[395]

Although the chain of the further events resembles a detective story, it became a standard place in the historical studies. The lucky entrepreneur was aware that the

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[390] Samaev, *Prisoedinenie Altaia k Rossii*.
[391] *Slovar' russkogo iazyka 17 v.*, 153.
[392] *PSZ,* 1735, N. 6939.
[393] *PSZ,* 1741, N. 8444.
[394] *PSZ,* 1734, N. 6559, art. 10.
[395] German, *Sochinenia o Sibirskikh rudnikakh i zavodakh*, pt. 1, 236.

copper mines contained silver either before or after he started his enterprise.[396] It was evident that not banal copper allured him to the dangerous buffer zone; a far more precious and radiant metal inspired him to launch a risky project and invest capitals in establishing the expensive factories located practically nowhere. It was believed that Demidov shipped copper down the Ob River to his West Siberian factories that had the proper equipment for mining silver and minting his own coins. In early 1744, in an attempt to prevent a leak of information, he presented the empress Elizabeth a piece of silver and asked for her patronage that meant a humble proposal to cooperate in the mining. Immediately, the monarch ordered the Berg-College to dispatch the experts for the thorough inspection of Demidovia's mines and plants.[397]

Formally, the experienced entrepreneur acted in accordance with the current mining law as stated in the Berg-Reglament of 1739, as he informed the authorities about his findings.[398] Demidov wisely asked the empress for a particular status, so that he would report, which meant share precious metal, directly to the ruler, with involving neither the Berg- nor Commerce-College.[399]

Afterwards, nothing else happened. In 1744, the empress signed a special decree that indicated vague advantages for Demidov, but her final decision on how to manage the plants stuck somewhere on the way.[400] Further events turned in imperial administration's favor, as Akinfii Demidov died in 1745. It is believed that the unresolved situation around the contested factories was the main reason of his sudden decease.

In accord with Demidov's testament, his youngest and beloved son was supposed to inherit the largest part of property, including the Kolyvanskie factories. Two elder and unhappy sons turned to the sovereign with a humble petition to divide the huge fortune on a fairer principle. The highest will separated the inheritance into three equal parts, except for the Kolyvanskie factories.[401] Finally, the plants, including the surrounding areas, were "taken over for Us" (*vziaty na Nas*), according to the

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[396] Liubomirov, *Ocherki po istorii metallurgii v Sibiri,* 113; Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 57.
[397] The general inventory of 1745-1747 indicated one silver and 69 copper mines. Kafengauz, *Istoriia khoziaistva Demidovykh*, 212.
[398] *PSZ,* 1739, N. 7766. Gold and silver mining were permitted if the authorities were notified.
[399] In the seventeenth century, the rights of the mining entrepreneurs were negotiated in a private deal with the state. Pavlenko, *Razvitie metallurgicheskoi promyshlennosti v Rossii,* 105.
[400] *PSZ,* 1744, N. 8998.
[401] Spasskii, *Zhizneopisanie Akinfiia Nikitisha Demidova*. Appendix 7.

empress Elizabeth's decree dated May 1, 1747.[402] Historians have pointed out that this property was actually confiscated from Demidov and turned into the monarch's domain in 1744, whereas the decree only confirmed the state of matters.[403]

In fact, silver deposits at the Zunghar edge should not have been the only location of precious metals in the realm. While Demidov secretly extracted silver, the government had high hopes for silver mines on the Solovki Isles in North Russia. The indications of gold were discovered in the Voitskie mines in the Olonets subprovince.[404] However, big expectations were dashed in both locations, so that Demidov's silver quickly became the central focus of the government's attention.

Most likely, there is nothing surprising about the early case of the ownership change. Demidov's story only repeated the pattern of the Stroganovs family, who were granted a charter that allowed them to colonize the border areas on the Ugra River (West Ural) in the late sixteenth century. After the decades of the successful colonization, the Russian ruler took the site away from them in the same manner.[405]

The takeover from Demidov over to Romanova reads as another chapter in the unequal relationship between those, who commanded Russian space, and those, who ran the risk of starting an enterprise of their own. Although the government encouraged and lured people to map and extract mineral treasures, yet, not many private developers rushed to fulfill the highest call.[406] The mining work required serious efforts and investments of the developers, who would spend years on establishing and managing a factory that could be taken away very quickly by the supreme ruler and his entourage. That was often a case in the Petrine empire, as the contemporary observers indicated.[407] Well aware of the entrepreneurs' feelings concerning the possible takeover of their property, the government attempted to dismiss mixed moods, as one of the earlier decrees indicated.[408] In Demidov's case, however, mixed expectations and fear proved prophetic.

The fate of the short-lived Demidovia was a sign of the precarious relationships between the state and elites. It was not about what the owner (bovi) was allowed to

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[402] *PSZ,* 1747, N. 9403.
[403] Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 57, 59.
[404] *PSZ,* 1733, N. 6370, 6403, 6444; 1744, N. 9091, 9148; 1770, N. 13493. Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy*, 127.
[405] *Istoria Urala s drevneishikh vremen do 1861 goda,* 34-35.
[406] *PSZ,* 1700, N. 1815; 1719, N. 3464.
[407] *Zapiski Iustusa Iulia, datskogo poslannika,* 302-3. The members of the ruling house also owned the mining factories. Gennin, de, *Opisanie Ural'skikh i Sibirskikh zavodov*, 739.
[408] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3464.

undertake. Nothing prevented the rulers (Jovi) from changing decisions, ignoring laws and turning them around in their own favor. Had the monarch accepted his humble suggestion to mine silver together, the enterprise "Romanova & Demidov" could have been in view only for a short time. Sooner or later, a single powerful hand would rule the silver mining factories on the edge of imperial Russia.

6.2. All Around Silver (1747-1760s)

If not Demidov's plants, a gaze from outside would have hardly stumbled on anything worthy of attention in the uncertain Russo-Zunghar border zone. However, the general map in "The Atlas of Imperial Russia of 1745" pointed to the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie factories on the very edge of southwestern Siberia.[409] The government's economic concerns drew now an invisible circle around the plants and mines of the deceased Demidov. What could have been a temporary mining project entailed the long-term transformation of an empty space into a concrete region that few would anticipate.

How did the government seek to impose control over a distant border? Imperial administration literally followed Demidov's suggestions; it involved neither the Berg-College nor any other central agency that handled the mineral and mining issues into managing the plants. What power institution was in charge for the extracting metals that provided for the monarch's personal wealth?

The government had a clear vision on how to effectively rule the promising plants. Since the Kolyvanskie factories posed part of the private domain of the empress, the Cabinet of Her/His Imperial Majesty (*Kabinet Eie/Ego Imperatorskogo Velichestva*) decisively took the matters into its hands. This elite agency handled all financial and personal matters related to the ruler.[410] The case in point illustrates a further step in dividing power over resources among the central agencies. With no previous experience either in mapping or mining, the Cabinet had what counted most. It possessed enough power and influence to exercise spatial control over the enterprise located in the middle of nowhere.

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[409] General'naia landkarta Rossiiskoi imperii (1745).

[410] Fedorov, *200-letie Kabineta*, 330-37; Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 59; Zhidkov, *Kabinetskoe zemlevladenie,* 52-60; Amburger, *Geschichte der Behördenorganization*, 105-106. This fact confirms the observation that in the early modern period the agencies directly related to the ruler's private property were keenly interested in mineral mapping. Novombergskii et al, "Materialy k istorii razvedki i poiskov", 3-63.

In order to organize and supervise the factories on site, a new regional structure, the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie mining agency (*Kantseliariia Kolyvano-Voskresenskogo Gornogo Nachalstva*), was established; the Saxon expert Andreas Baer was appointed a chief officer. The agency immediately launched extracting auriferous silver out of copper. All metals were delivered directly to the treasury.

Although unfamiliar with Michel Foucault's works on power and discourse, imperial officials blocked off central institutions as well as Siberian administrators from the managing of the site.[411] The formula "the shorter the chain, the more effective management" worked out well; the Kolyvano-Voskresenskoe agency reported directly to the Cabinet. The recipe was well known in the period, as the chief officers at the Siberian and Olonets mining centers reported directly to the monarch.[412] The Nerchinskie factories in East Siberia were managed separately from the local administration, and that experience was obviously taken into account, too.[413]

As stated earlier, since late 1719 on, the Siberian provincial chiefs were forbidden from intermingling with the mining.[414] For the Russian ruler, tight control of the faithful subjects did not work well in the close proximity, whereas long distances only fueled bribery and corruption in the age of slow communication. This was notably evident in very recent affairs of the Siberian administrators.[415] What constituted the principal difference between silver and fur? Provincial officials and fur tribute collectors habitually replaced valuable fur with the items of the poorer quality.[416] Silver-bearing ore was not a product for immediate consumption without expert knowledge and the mining equipment. It is evident that none of the regional rulers could set up and run a complicated mining process on their own. Would they secretly mine silver in order to obtain a metal analog of the "pominki", a special tax charged from the natives for the regional officials' personal needs?[417] Nevertheless, with a ready-to-go plant, local power agents could easily redirect precious metals into their pockets. However, having the separate agency on site enabled the government to keep the

[411] Foucault, *Die Ordnung des Diskurses*, 25.
[412] *PSZ,* 1734, N. 6559. Those were Vasilii Tatishchev and Wilhelm de Gennin.
[413] Kuzin, *Istoriia otkrytii rudnykh mestorozhdenii v Rossii*, 130.
[414] *PSZ,* 1719, N. 3464; repeated in 1734, N. 6559, art. 21.
[415] The most recent cases: the Siberian governor M. Gagarin and the vice-governor of the Irkutskaia province A. Zholobov were sentenced with capital punishment for bribery and abuse of power. *PSZ,* 1736, N. 7009; Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, 345-47.
[416] Chicherin, *Oblastnye uchrezhdeniia Rossii v 17-m veke*, 318-330.
[417] Bakhrushin, *Iasak v Sibiri*, 60-61.

mining more transparent. Therefore, the otherwise inevitable "sharing" with the regional administrators was excluded.

Apparently, there are not many universal methods for the regionalization, be it for the administrative or resource purposes, but some basic patterns can be outlined for each historical period. Traditionally, regions are regarded as an outcome of diverse economic and political practices, strategies of the external and internal actors. Geographers point to the territorial separation, the establishment of the borders, etc.[418] Obviously, not many tools for the making of a mineral region were available in the period. The lack of the essential principles enabled two power institutions, the Cabinet and the Kolyvanskoe agency, to act without observing formal restrictions and considering the interests of other power branches.

This regionalization case ignored the traditional Russian method of gathering the territory around a town. Such practice was at work in establishing the Siberian districts around the colonial forts such as Tobolsk, Irkutsk, etc. The forts would slowly grow into administrative centers, whereas their meaning evolved around the exaction of the fur tribute. In the scarcely populated Zunghar borderland, there was neither a proper town nor a well-developed infrastructure that could be used as a core to gather the adjacent territories. Established in 1709 as the Bikatunskaia outpost, the small town of Biisk was located too far from the plants.

The deficiencies of cultural landscape were solved by the following means: one of the settlements was renamed into Kolyvan' and turned into a residence of the agency. Shortly after, the agency moved from the settlement to a small town Barnaul with a mining factory nearby. Probably, only the far distance prevented the Cabinet from setting up a town with a more common name like Ekaterinburg or Petrovskaia sloboda in the northern Olonets subprovince. The shine of imperial glory was not wasted in the barely known periphery; otherwise, a town named *Elizavetburg, - zavodsk,* or *–slavsk* would have emerged on the map.

The regional agency powerfully directed the mounting imperial presence in the buffer zone. In order to protect the metallurgical plants, the Kolyvano-Voskresenskaia fortification line was established; it stretched from the fort Ust'-Kamenogorsk in present East Kazakhstan through Biisk over to Kuznetsk in present Kemerovskaia region.

[418] Gilbert, "The Idea of the region", 157-175; Paasi, "The instituionalization of regions", 105-146; Murphy, "Regions as social constructs"; Castreen, *IEHG,* XI, p. 136 -150.

Dozens of new forts sprang up along the line that fulfilled two tasks: it marked a newly established state border with China and outlined exact the southeastern boundaries of the factories.[419]

What was the basic structuring of the territory? The areas between the Irtysh and the Ob Rivers had become the scene of the intense colonizing since Demidov's time. Now, the ruling groups' concerns compressed the mines and factories into a closed circle that swallowed nearby space with geometric progression. The entire environment was set in motion in order to provide a nonstop silver extraction. Natural and cultural landscape saw a series of the dramatic transformation, as forests would be systematically cut down to provide a coal supply, rivers served as communication routes to deliver ore from the mines to the plants, roads connected workers and peasants' settlements to mines and plants. The nonstop mining operations required more natural and human resources; geological mapping assiduously sought for new deposits.[420]

Gradually, the Kolyvanskaia agency assumed total control over a swath of territory in South West Siberia. The area of the factories spread out like an ink stain on paper; it took up larger parts of the Tomskii and Kuznetskii districts of the Siberian province and beyond. The sprawling stain increased due to a simple fact that the boundaries between the plants and the surrounding administrative units had not been charted yet. Since the Cabinet and the agency were primarily concerned with the effective economic management, the accurate borders were of secondary importance.

In the meantime, Russians advanced deep into the ex-Zunghar lands that became practically unpeopled after the bloody Manchu-Chinese invasion of the mid-1750s.[421] In fact, the empire incorporated much of the northern Zunghar state, in particular, the Altai range, by default, whilst its southern part was added to China. The exact international border would be marked here only in the 1860s. This mountain fraction of the boundary counted as the most inaccessible along the entire Russo-Chinese borderline.[422]

The territory of the plants was turned into a strategic point of imperial control. The agency did not have to pacify the local nomadic population, however. Due to the

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[419] *Voennaia Entsiklopediia*, 48-50; Grekov, *Ocherki po istorii geograficheskikh issledovanii*, 251-53.
[420] *PSZ,* 1763, N. 11931, art. 9; Gnucheva, *Geograficheskii departament Akademii Nauk*, 355-56.
[421] Samaev, *Prisoedinenie Altaia k Rossii*; Perdue, *China Marches West*, pts. 5-7.
[422] Veniukov, *Opyt voennogo obozreniia russkikh granits v Azii,* 210.

Zunghar-Qing war, the natives were too few in number and not of a serious threat to the factories. Otherwise, their resistance to the mining endeavor would have been much more visible in historical records.

In the meantime, the mining frontier extended steadily southward. Although Russians avoided active military operations in the buffer zone, regular mapping trips were undertaken beyond the state borders with the Qing. Their logic was clear. If the ranges around the factories contained plentiful silver reserves, why would not nearby terrains hide similar wealth?[423]

The following features distinguish this early case of the resource regionalization:

- An extraordinary concentration of mineral and natural resources in a particular location: copper and silver deposits, forests, rivers, etc.;
- The specific management: the Kolyvanskaia mining agency accountable to the Cabinet;[424]
- The location in the buffer zone on the edge of Russia and China;
- In terms of the social dimension, the area was scarcely populated by local nomads; forced peasant migration made up the bulk of miners;[425] dispatching criminals to the factories was banned in 1776;[426]
- A relatively low military presence; a local battalion was set up in 1764;[427]

Moreover, between the mid-1760s through the early 1780s, the plants became a regional mint center. To ship heavy copper to Ekaterinburg was too expensive. For that reason, copper coin designed for limited circulation in Siberia (*sibirskaia moneta*) was stamped practically at the international border.[428]

It is evident that from the late 1720s onward the site became a project of resource colonization comparable only to the Siberian factories (the Ural). A schematic representation of the 1770s displays the intensity of the colonization efforts. A range of the different networks and elements filled natural and cultural landscape: ascribed peasants and workers; the Saxon staff; mines, stone quarries, metallurgic factories; a defensive line: forts, outposts; roads, settlements, etc.[429] (Figure 7)

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[423] *PSZ,* 1761, N. 11185, art. 12. Doklad deistvitel'nogo statskogo sovetnika Alsuf'eva.
[424] *200-letie Kabineta E.I.V.*, 330-37.
[425] Zheravina, *Ocherki po istorii pripisnykh krestian*, 43.
[426] *PSZ,* 1770, N. 13506; 1776, N. 14462.
[427] *PSZ,* 1764, N. 11185; 1763, N. 11931, art. 1-2; 1764, N. 12230.
[428] *PSZ,* 1763, N. 11893; 1781, N. 15168.
[429] Pallas. *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen*, Tafelband, 620.

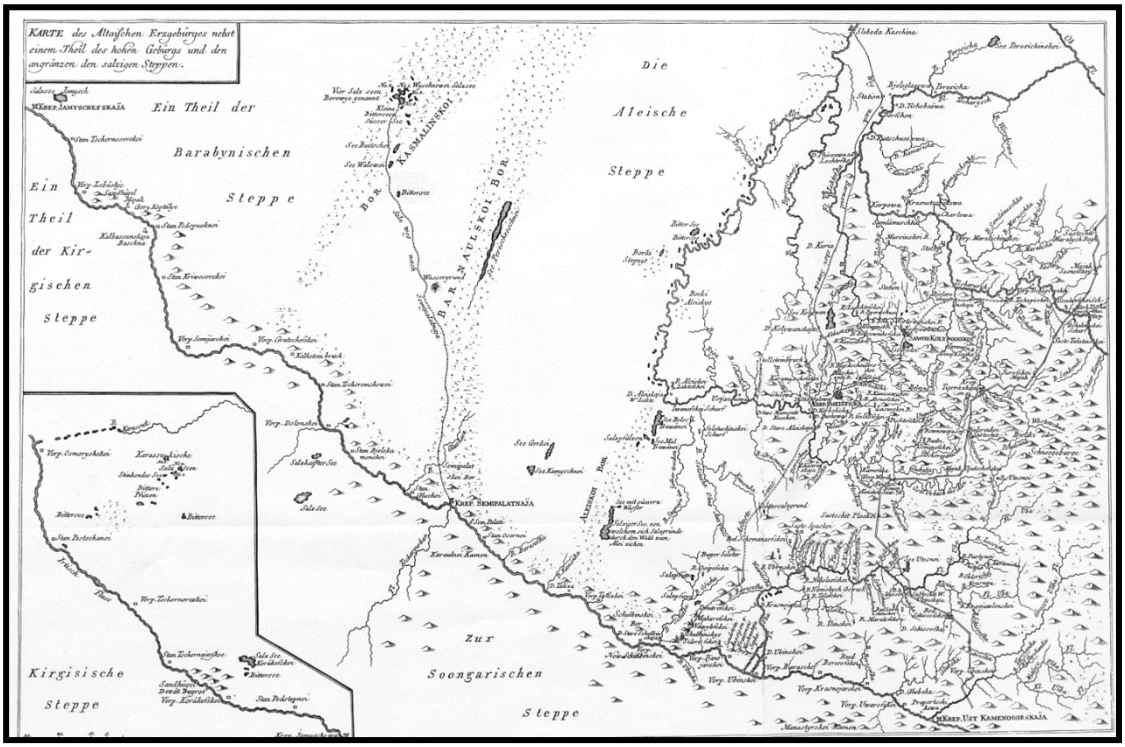

Figure 8. "Karte des Altaischen Erzgebuerges nebst einem Theil des hohen Gebuergs und den angraenzenden salzigen Steppen" by P.-S. Pallas.

In these formative decades, the systematic exploitation of metals somehow met the regionalization criteria.[430] None of the contemporary maps indicated the exact outlines of the region, but it already existed in the minds of the powerful ones. Although the Cabinet did not plan to create a regional entity initially, it conceptualized the territory as a consistent unit; the rulers' concerns and efforts gave the area its regional coherence. From the very outset, the government could have founded a resource region by a following decree: "Be in the wild areas between the Tomskii and Kuznetskii districts a mining province and be called Kolyvanskaia".[431]

How was frontier silver used? Up until recently, Russia imported Chinese silver to cover mint needs for the lack of own reserves. However, in 1754, the Imperial Mint stamped one million rubles out of gold and silver of the Kolyvanskie factories.[432] Precious metals were invested into the items that produced lasting symbolical representations of imperial glory. In 1750, the very first silver output of 500 kg was melted for a sarcophagus designed for the remnants of Alexander Nevskii, the patron

[430] Tuan, Space and Place, 6, 136.
[431] Contemporary rhetorics is borrowed from the decree on establishing the Orenburgskaia province: *PSZ,* 1744, N. 8901; also, Kirilov, *Tsvetushchee sostoianie*, 281.
[432] *PSZ,* 1754, N. 10188.

saint of St. Petersburg.[433] In accordance with the ancient saying, "silver answereth it all", precious metals from the remote plants attested to the majesty of the monarch and his/her entourage. (Figure 8) The empress' dedication to the patron saint spoke in the words of Lomonosov's poetical lyre:

"Iavlaia dshcher' ego userdie sviatoe,
Semu zashchitniku vozdvigla raku v chest'
Ot pervogo srebra, chto nedro ei zemnoe
Otkrylo, kak na tron blagovolila sest'".[434]

The mountains around the plants contained valuable quartz, chalcedony, agate, and jasper. Pillars, vases, candelabra produced at the local lapidary factory served for sustaining imperial glory. They were displayed at the international exhibitions and presented to prominent visitors.[435] Lomonosov proved right: foremost, mineral treasures served a purpose "of adorning the MAJESTY, and astounding the world".

A product of state concerns and efforts, the Kolyvanskie factories, "the largest golden and silver mining site" in Eurasia of the period, brought over 240% benefits annually.[436] From 1747 through 1860, the factories produced 116 000 pud silver.[437] The protected caravans delivered auriferous silver from Barnaul to St. Petersburg five times a year. Further on, gold was extracted out of silver at the State Mint.[438]

The Cabinet and the agency administered the vast area in West Siberia. Tight control over material practices and landscapes radically transformed the area. The power groups' strategies generated a certain location and constructed its regional identity, physical parameters, activities, and meanings.[439] Once populated by the Zunghar vassals, the areas of the plants rapidly matured over several decades. Restructured and given a new meaning, they became increasingly incorporated into the orbit of imperial concerns. Since the territory represented a source of the monarch's private wealth, it took a special position in tsarist Russia's territorial order.

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[433] Ruzhkevich, *Aleksandro-Nevskaia lavra*, 768-71; *Russkoe khudozhestvennoe serebro,* nos. 43-49. More in: Zhidkov, *Kabinetskoe zemlevladenie*, 58-59; Zheravina, *Kabinetskoe hoziaistvo v Sibiri*, 266-88; Wortmann, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy from Peter the Great to the Abdication of Nicolas II.*

[434] Lomonosov, "Nadpis', kotoraia izobrazhena na velikolepnoi serebrianoi rake", 117.

[435] Strukov, *Kratkii ocherk Altaiskogo gornogo vedomstva*, 70-73; *Raboty kamnerezov Kolyvani v Ermitazhe; Goethes Sammlungen zur Mineralogie, Geologie und Paläonthologie,* 442-3, 501-4.

[436] Fersman, "Na Altae", 378-87; Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 196.

[437] The equivalent of 1,856,000 kilo silver and 14,400 kilo gold. Semenov, *Geograficheskо-statisticheskii slovar',* 77-80.

[438] Karpenko, *Gornaia promyshlennost' Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 139.

[439] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 47; Pred, "Place as a historically contingent process", 279-97.

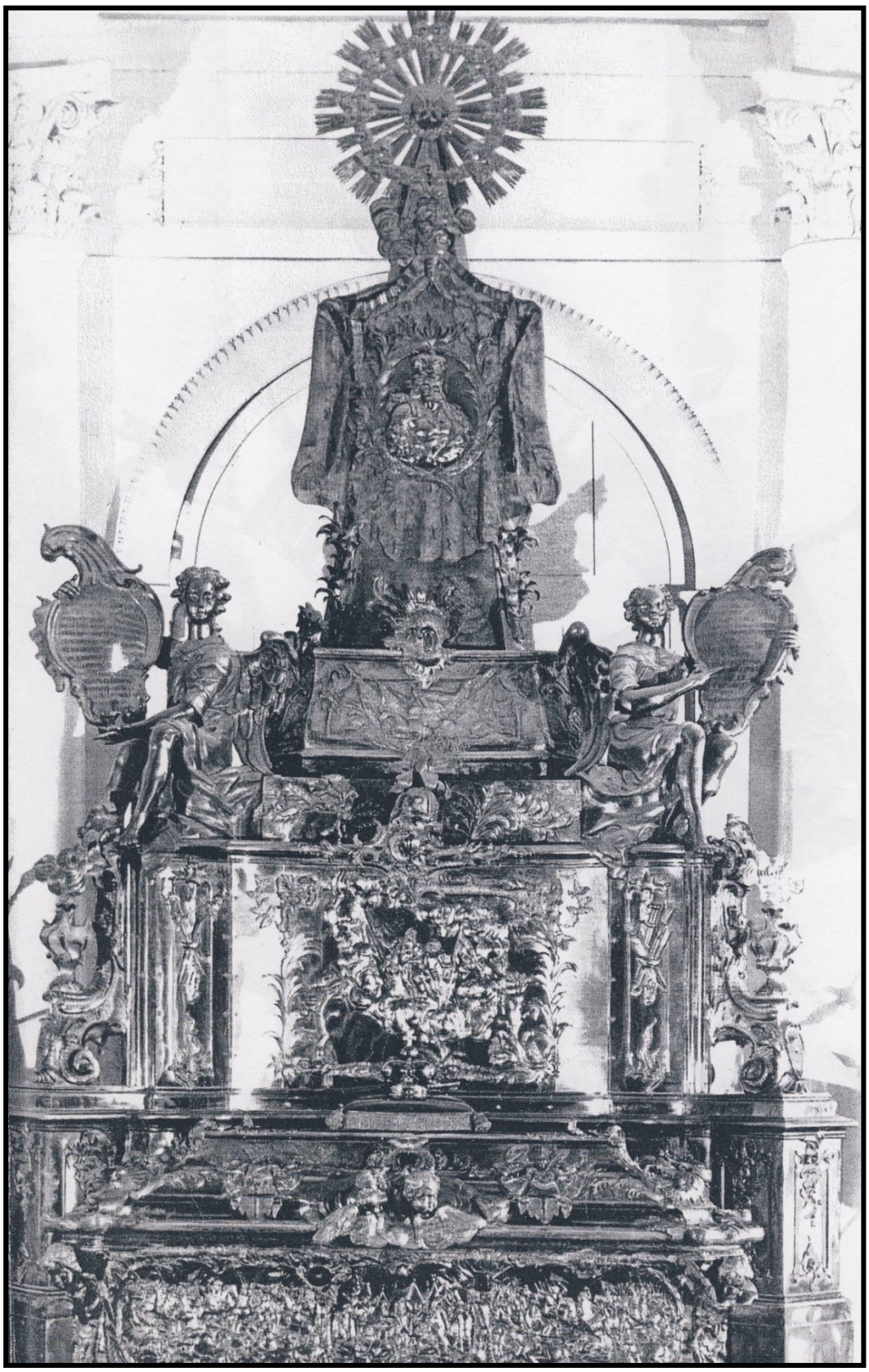

Figure 9. A detail of the sarcophagus with the saint Alexander Nevskii's remnants at the Alexandro-Nevskaia Lavra, St. Petersburg.

6.3. The Factory Rises to an Imperial Province (the 1770s – 1790s)

In the course of the administrative reforms of the empress Catherine the Great, the mining was brought under the jurisdiction of civil power, as shortly discussed earlier.[440] A new central institution and one of four State Expeditions, the Mineral and Mining Expedition (*Ekspeditsia gornykh del*), was established in 1781. Its branches at the provincial State Chambers (*Kazionnye palaty*) supervised the mining across the country.[441]

In the meantime, a grand-scale territorial reform was launched that gradually spread to the imperial peripheries. How were these important changes manifested in regard of the sovereign's plants? Intensive colonization led to the area's further incorporation into the imaginary imperial body. In 1779, for the first time, it was given an important administrative function: the territory was transformed into the Kolyvanskaia oblast and divided into four districts (*uezdy*).[442] The status of oblast' signified the newly acquired areas in the territorial order of the country. The chief officer of the factories, General Boris Meller acted as the regional ruler (*pravitel)*. The Kolyvanskaia oblast posed a further step in the regionalization experiment. Two imperial branches, mining and administrative, merged into one; one official was in charge of two divisions.[443] In terms of the management, there was not much change in the beginning; the factories remained under the Cabinet's caring control for a while.[444]

A further burst of the administrative regionalization awaited the newborn Kolyvanskaia oblast'. The 1783 edict transformed it into an imperial province (*guberniia*).[445] Although created as an administrative unit, in reality, this one posed a pure resource region. The mining factories, not the earlier forts, comprised the morphologic core of the province, whereas its regional identity was rooted on material practices of the resource exploitation.[446]

The experiment on resource governing continued further. The plants were transferred under the supervision of the State Chamber (*Kazennyi Departament*) of the Kolyvanskaia oblast. The provincial Mineral and Mining Expedition at the State

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[440] *PSZ,* 1783, 15660.
[441] *PSZ,* 1781, N. 15120; 1783, N. 15740, 15474.
[442] *PSZ,* 1775, N. 14392, art. 1; 1779, N. 14868, 14869.
[443] *PSZ,* 1779, N. 14882.
[444] *PSZ,* 1783, N. 15740, §42.
[445] *PSZ,* 1781, N. 15171; 1782, N. 15548.
[446] "Karta Kolyvanskoi gubernii", quoted after the edition of 1800. The cartouche indicated a mining oven and other mining paraphernalia.

Department (*Gornaia Expeditsiia Kolyvanskoi gubernii*) replaced the mining agency in 1783. Afterwards, this experimental time would be referred to as: "then there were either too many supervisors or none at all".[447]

The institutional changes had immediate implications on the silver output. The newly established regional expedition failed in keeping up with the annual production plan of 1 000 pud of silver, an equivalent of 16 metric tons, set up by the Cabinet, and the silver production dropped down to 400 pud. The previous management model was hastily restored in 1785. The experienced mining officer Stefan Kashka, the head the regional expedition, was given the task to quickly bring the production back to the expected level.[448]

However, the status of the province was not the final point for the deceased Demidov's factories. The increase in the regional status continued in 1783 with the arrival of the huge Kolyvanskaia region (*Kolyvanskoe namestnichestvo*) that consisted of the Kolyvanskaia and the Irkutskaia provinces.[449] (Figure 10)

The incredible growth of the copper mine into a cluster of the factories and a series of the large regions occurred due to the fact that Siberian borderland provided an easier spatial material for carving out new regions than Russia proper. Unlikely, the territories around the Voitskii golden mine in the Olonets province would have ever grown into "the Voitskaia province". However, the rapid transformation of the factories formed a case of its own, as it differed from the similar instances. In the same period, the East Siberian Nerchinskie factories were added to the monarch's private property.[450] Lead was produced there, a metal crucially important for extracting silver out of copper in the Kolyvanskie plants. The area of the Nerchinskii factories could have taken the similar steps of regionalization, yet it never saw any serious attempts at the region making.

Located between the seventeenth century colonization centers, Tobolsk in West and Irkutsk in East Siberia, the Kolyvanskie factories formed the major core that gave meaning to a large spatial void on the maps of Siberia. This resource location became as equally important as the earlier hubs of colonization.

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[447] *PSZ,* 1804, N. 21460.
[448] *PSZ,* 1785, N. 16206; 1786, N. 16312.
[449] *PSZ,* 1783, N. 15737; Polunin, *Novyi i polnyi slovar' Rossiskogo gosudarstva*, 297-99; Gakman, *Kratkoe zemleopisanie Rossiiskago gosudarstva*, §89; Pleshcheev, *Obozrenie Rossiiskoi imperii*,145-7.
[450] *PSZ.,* 1787, N. 16496.

However, the recently established province and namestnichestvo were revoked in the course of the emperor Paul's reforms in 1796. These changes dramatically reduced the number of the administrative territories: the Kolyvanskaia province and region were erased off imperial maps and memories.[451] The factories landed in the Tobolskaia province, whereas the Kolyvanskoe agency was brought back to the stage next year.[452]

Figure 10. The Map of the Kolyvanskoe Namestnichestvo, 1792.

These events leave the breathtaking rise from a copper mine to an imperial province open to suggestions on how the regionalization would have evolved further. However, up until now, the territorial changes unfolded without involving much of local geographies. Neither central nor regional elites associated the factories to the Altai range. Contemporary mental maps connected the mining factories to the man-made landscape. The silver snuffbox of the mid-century is a good example for that. It illustrates a rough map of Siberia with the Bikatunskaia fort and a small mining town of Zmeinogorsk with the most plentiful silver reserves of the Kolyvanskie plants. Commentators pointed out that its treasures could not be compared to any similar place across Europe.[453]

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[451] *PSZ,* 1796, N. 17634.
[452] *PSZ,* 1796, N. 17567, 17678; 1797, N. 17862.
[453] Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii muzei, Moscow, Hall N. 24. Quote: Renovants, *Mineralogicheskie izvestiia o Altaiskikh gorakh*, pt. 5; Bakmeister, *Opyt o biblioteke i Kabinete redkostei i Istorii Natural'noi Sanktpeterburgskoi Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk*, 173.

The imaginary region around the mining factories took a special place in the territorial taxonomy of the empire. Invested with the administrative meanings, the indispensable Kolyvan' illustrated the growing strength of the resource regionalization as well as the government's power to carve out as many territorial units out of the vague borderland as needed. Inherited from the founder Demidov, the too long combination *Kolyvano-Voskresenskie silver mining factories* served as an all-encompassing toponym, and this baroque umbrella stood for a huge economic region in southwestern Siberia. A rapid rise from the mine to the province was presented mostly on maps and in geographical writings. Neither ascribed peasants, miners nor dispersed native groups in the nearby areas felt the impact of the formal changes. Further transformations of this territory, however, would be more tangible for the local population.

6.4. The Village of Kaftanchikova and Other Matters (1800s-1850s)

The early nineteenth century marked two important moments for the monarch's plants. With a standard reference to a too great size that presumably caused administrative inconvenience, the Tobolskaia province was divided into two parts.[454] The factories landed in the newly established Tomskaia province and remained under the Cabinet's supervision.[455] Further steps became apparent with the arrival of the new mineral legislation in 1804–1806 that redefined the territorial order of the country through the mineral optic.

This period merits our attention precisely because it covers a transition in the terminology from the factories to a district. Although the site continued to be known under the same long name, the period registered a certain trend among the networks of imperial officials, mining staff, mapmakers, and scientists. For the decades to come, two territorial terms regarding the site were set in circulation: the Kolyvanskie factories and the Kolyvanskii district.[456] There was nothing unusual about it: practically all state-run and private mining sites were interchangeably referred to as either "factories" or "district". Obviously, there was no need to officially rename the factories into a mining district. As in the previous century, the exact territorial status was not the main concern of the ruling groups. Sooner or later, the Cabinet and the local agency would change

[454] *PSZ*, 1804, N. 21183, art. 1.
[455] *PSZ,* 1804, N. 21.460.
[456] *PSZ,* 1807, 22498, art. 2-6; Ledebur, Bunge, Meier, *Puteshestvie po Altaiskim goram;* multiple publications in *The Gornyi Zhurnal*.

over to the more convenient "district". More important, however, was the incorporation of the name of the nearby mountain range into the factories that will be discussed below.

In the absence of a single source that would document the transition of the Kolyvanskie factory into the Altai mining district, this process can be presented as a series of the incoherent breaks that would stretch over several decades. It can be put into a temporal frame that consists of two cartographical works: "A detailed map of the Kolyvano-Voskresenskaia mining district" by the mining expert Leonard Pansner (1816) and "The map of the Altai mining district with the adjacent areas" by the Moscow university professor Grigory Shchurovskii (1846).[457] The span of three decades allows capturing a merge of the mining factories and the mountain range into a single entity.

The 1822 administrative reforms of the Siberian General-Governor Mikhail Speranskii's renewed the old question of balancing the administrative and resource branches. As discussed earlier, an equal partnership between two power divisions did not work well; sooner or later, one of them would dominate the other. The government sought for the possible solutions; one of which designated the general-governor as a middleman between two branches.[458] Along with reshaping the territory of Siberia, the reforms changed the balance of power for the favor of the resource branch. This move carried important implications for the monarch's region. Since 1822 on, the acting chief officer of the Kolyvanskie factories fulfilled an extra administrative task as a civil governor of the Tomskaia province.[459] In terms of power hierarchy, the Cabinet and the mining agency outplayed the regional civil branch. The control of the Cabinet expanded, for it kept the right to appoint the head of the resource region, who would also rule over the extremely large administrative province in West Siberia.

In 1828, the "Highly approved charter on the management of the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie mining factories" ("*Vysochaishe utverzhdennoe Uchrezhdenie o upravlenii Kolyvano-Voskresenskikh gornykh zavodov"*) appeared. The local agency was renamed into "*gornoe upravlenie*". Four hundred paragraphs of the Charter handled all issues related to the plants.[460] This document is particularly valuable in terms of illustrating the "darker" sides of the Russian Berg Discourse that implied total

[457] "Podrobnaia karta Kolyvano-Voskresenskoi gornoi okrugi"*;* Shchurovskii, *Atlas*, no. 1.
[458] *PSZ,* 1804, N. 21460, 517.
[459] *PSZ,* 1822, N. 29124, art. 5.
[460] *PSZ,* 1828, N. 1960.

control over geographical space, its landscapes and resources. Despite the lack of the clearly set boundaries, the territory of the factories was tightly structured and controlled; all material and cultural elements served one single purpose of keeping the maximum level of the metal extraction.[461] Not a single area was allowed for any kind of rent; neither a single building nor a living house could be built in the regional center, miners' and peasants' settlements without permission of the agency, not a single tree was to be cut in local forests.[462] The entire territory remained relatively isolated from the rest of the country. Obviously, modernity was made here through the control over space. This turned the factories to a modern phantasmagoric place, whose essential structures were designed and organized not only locally, but also by distant authorities.[463]

For the sake of a more effective management, the Cabinet transferred the factories into the realm of the Minister of Finances, Count Georg von Cancrin, from 1830 to 1855. This imperial powerhouse had been in charge of the mining in Russia since 1811.[464] The period under the Ministry of Finances counts as the zenith in the history of the factories. It was also important for the further mapping. The factories landed under the personal supervision of the Minister, Count Georg von Cancrin. His task was crystal clear: the mining was expected to produce 1 000 pud (16 000 kg) of silver annually. For this purpose, the ministry regularly dispatched expensive expeditions for the further exploration of the mineral reserves.[465]

Apparently, "the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie silver mining factories" was without a question a troublesome place name for the central and regional bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the inconvenient name became part of the identity of the site. Even reduced to a half, this title still posed a challenging undertaking. However, according to the 1834 decree, the chief officer of the Kolyvanskie factories was changed into the chief officer of the Altaiskie mining factories. The same regarded the regional ruling institution: the Kolyvano-Voskresenskoe mining agency became the Altaiskoe mining agency (*Altaiskoe gornoe pravlenie*).[466] There was nothing extraordinary about this: a few years before, the similar Permskoe agency was casually renamed into the Uralskoe

[461] *PSZ,* 1828, N. 1960, pt. 1, ch. 1, § 3-6.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Giddens, *Konsequenzen der Moderne*, 137.
[464] *PSZ,* 1830, N. 3604.
[465] Tchihatcheff, "*Voyage Scientifique dans L'Altai Oriental*"; Shchurovskii, *Geologicheskoe puteshestvie po Altaiu.*
[466] *PSZ,* 1834, N. 6915.

agency.[467] But why complicate the matters? If the plants were to be given another name, why not use Barnaul, the headquarters of the regional agency? What were the possible factors that prompted the authorities to change the name?

For the sake of a more productive mineral mapping of the empire, the influential Minister of Finances invited Alexander von Humboldt to visit the Ural region in summer of 1829. His journey was organized with all available means that smoothed notorious Russian roads for the scientific celebrity. After exploring the Urals, Humboldt decided to go beyond the itinerary and visit the prominent Kolyvanskie factories. While there, he did not miss a chance to cross the Russo-Chinese borderline. Afterwards, the scholar would refer to this side trip as: "only the Altai and Kolyvan' brought us the true joy of the journey to Asia".[468]

Humboldt's journey did not result in a breakthrough in natural sciences comparable to his earlier findings in South America, but it proved productive for the further discussions on Central Asian geography. [469] In a series of works, he suggested the existence of four major ranges in Asia: the Himalaya, the Kunlun, the Tian Shan, and the Altai. The latter was introduced in the following words: "we call the Altai range the most northern part of the great highland of Inner Asia [ ], the Altai, due to its metal ores [...] is well known to the Europeans".[470]

There is little direct evidence between Humboldt's theoretical findings and the renaming of the Kolyvansko-Voskresenskoe agency. However, the weight of his academic authority and a clear intellectual motivation could be read behind the key decision made by the Minister of Finances, Count George von Cancrine. The Russian monarch's metallurgical plants were located at the foothills of one of the major Asian ranges. Why not refer to the regional institution as the Altaiskoe agency?

At first glance, the renaming barely affected the state of things, but, in the long-term perspective, it proved to be a watershed in the mapping of the place. The Altai became an overarching label for the region. Why did this place name prove indispensable? Humboldt's words provide a clear answer: "simple names are easy to keep in mind".[471]

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[467] "O pereimenovanii Permskago gornago pravleniia Ural'skim gornym pravleniem". *PSZ,* 1831, N. 4872.
[468] *Perepiska Gumbol'dta*, 86-88; also Anychin, "Gumboldt kak puteshestvennik i geograf", 21-177.
[469] Humboldt did not take travel notes and assigned his younger colleague with the task: Rose, *Mineralogisch - geognostische Reise nach dem Ural, dem Altai und dem Kaspischen Meer*.
[470] Gumboldt, "O gornykh kriazhakh i vulkanakh vnutrennei Azii", 301-322.
[471] Ibid., 309.

Between the mid-1830s and late 1840s, multiple working terms were in use; the Kolyvano-Voskresenskie and the Altaiskie mining factories, district, agency. Obviously, this large variety of the references did not pose any problem to the ruling groups.[472] By the mid-century, the Altai displaced the older toponym that disappeared from use in records.[473] The Kolyvano-Voskresenskie mining plants as a general name worked well for a century, however, it had its limits. The early modern „factory" (*zavody*) exhausted its semantics and gave way to the term that provided the place with the fuller territorial meanings.

It is evident that the Altai region was not so much a physically distinctive entity as a discursively constructed setting. Together, a series of man-made landscapes, mines, factories, goldfields, stone quarries, and ascribed peasants constituted what was known as the Altai mining district.[474] Dozens of mining districts of imperial Russia consisted of the same elements. Meanwhile, the short and convenient place name "Altai" acquired a special sense, as it represented now the large area of the sovereign's private property. The reference to the district was to have an obligatory extension: "under the supervision of the Cabinet of His Majesty" (*v vedomstve Kabineta E. I. V.*). One more region-making factor came to the concern in the meantime. The boundaries of the region were neither clear nor stable due to its specific position in the territorial order of the empire and the low eventability in the Siberian borderland. Whenever needed for the mining purposes, more areas out of the nearby administrative units were joined to the district. Shifting resource geographies changed the situation, however, when gold deposits were discovered in the nearby Altai Mountains.[475] The Cabinet immediately banned private entrepreneurs from mapping and mining the coveted metal. In order to keep the goldfields under tight control, the accurate borders of the district were set up in 1838, for the first time in its history.[476] From the international Russo-Chinese border in the south, the territory stretched for over a thousand versts far to the north by reaching the provincial center of Tomsk and making the nearby village of Kaftanchikova the farthest northern point. The exact borders made the Altai

[472] *PSZ,* 1835, 8629, § 5 - §11.
[473] *PSZ,* 1834, N. 6847; 1837, N. 10839; 1838, N. 11188; 1845, N. 17626; 1849, N. 23263; 1855, N. 29358.
[474] Semenov, *Geograficheskо-statisticheskii slovar'*, II, 77-80.
[475] Danilevskii, *Russkoe zoloto. Istoriia otkrytiia i dobychi do serediny 19 veka*, 244-45.
[476] *Ustav Gorny*, prilozhenie k stat'e *2431,* 490.

mining district one of the most clear-cut and conceptually cohesive economic regions in the country.

Gold fever hit the entire Siberia meanwhile. The Altaiskoe agency featured an important interregional role of supervising the private gold mining in western and a good half of eastern Siberia.[477] The gold output was obligatory shipped to Barnaul and afterwards directed to the Mint in St. Petersburg.

The establishment of the accurate borderlines had important implications for the place that would become obvious with the launch of massive peasant migration from the Russian heartland to Siberia. Primarily, the Cabinet was determined to keep the peasants away from the district. However, peasant colonization under certain restrictions was permitted in the Altai mining region in 1865.[478] The term "district" was indispensable now, as peasants were granted stripes of land in the district, not at the factories. Although restrained with certain conditions, the place immediately became a prominent landmark on peasants' mental maps, and the number of illegal migrants skyrocketed quickly. The closing decades of the century saw an enormous rise of the legal and illegal peasant settlements. The monarch's region transformed into a home for over 650 000 peasants, who made up over a half of all settlers.[479]

The colonization of the area marked a conversion from one spatial organization to another. The meaning of the district shifted from the extracting of metals to the exploitation of natural environment. Once the site took shape as a constellation of mines and factories. Now, it posed a wealth of extremely good environmental features for the agrarian colonization: the abundance of flatlands thinly populated by scarce indigenous groups, fertile soil, favorable climatic properties, etc.

A general shift in priorities toward agrarian colonization led to considerable changes in land use. Landscapes were gradually turned to new purposes. The Cabinet redirected colonial activities from the foothills onto the steppe and reorganized the operational framework, whereas the region was assigned new functions. The ever-augmenting intensity of colonization could be notably registered at landscape level, as the nomads' steppes were plowed up and the black earth fertility fed Russian peasants.

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[477] *PSZ,* 1838*,* 11188. A department on gold mining was established in the Kolyvanskoe agency: *PSZ,* 1833, 5902; 6222.
[478] Stolypin, Krivosheev, *Poezdka v Sibir'*; Skliarov, *Pereselenie i zemleustroistvo v Sibiri,* 69-70, 107-108, 226, 262-268.
[479] Turchannikov, *Itogi pereselencheskogo dvizheniia za vremia s 1896 po 1909 gody*; Morozov, *Altaiskii okrug v kolonizatsionnom otnoshenii,* 17.

6.5. Two Become One (1870s – 1890s)

The administrative mapping of the Altai region set in motion several understated and interrelated processes that had far-reaching implications:

(1) Two different entities, the mining district and the nearby mountain range, increasingly overlapped and merged into one territorial entity;

(2) The geographical name "the Altai" doubled. The name shifted to the plains; it incorporated the contrastive landscape types: physical elevations up to 4 000 meter as well as flatlands and steppes.

Thus, power geographies produced a new product that can be labeled as "the imperial Altai". In a sense, the factories became a hybrid place, as it was impossible to accurately separate the district from the mountain range and the other way around. This complicates an answer to a simple question: what did the Altai represent in the Russian geographical imaginations since the mid-century: the economic region or the highland? It seems that the hybrid entity implied both.

The imperial Altai split the regional optics into two. Formally, the Altai region took up four out of six administrative districts of the Tomskaia province; it neither increased nor decreased their number. Through the formal lens, one could see the boring contours of the districts.[480] The other, more powerful lens magnified the dynamic contours of the Altai mining region by tightly circling the most blessed area in southwestern Siberia. On some maps, the depiction of the districts of the Tomskaia province served as a mere backdrop for highlighting the contours of the more prominent region.[481] This splitting optic suggests the growing gap between the regional identity of the Altai and the rest of Siberia. The former "lived" a far fuller regional life than the Tomskaia province.

Traditionally, Siberia was divided into western and eastern parts. The two-sided optic highlighted a new way of constructing this large region. Two mining districts of the Russian monarch, one in western and the other in eastern Siberia, created a large imagined unit: "the kabinetskie" or "the Altaisko-Nerchinskie lands".[482] This perspective split Siberia into two unequal parts: on one hand, the usual administrative provinces, and, on the other, the sovereign's private regions that were more imperial

[480] *PSZ,* 1822, N. 29125, §13.
[481] *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, I, 402-403.
[482] Vinogradov, *Illustrirovannyi putevoditel po Vserossiiskoi promyshlennoi i khudozhestvennoi vystavke 1896 goda v Nizhnem Novgorode'*, 44-47.

than the rest of Siberia. The Altai acquired a special sense, for it meant more than a mere place on the map; rather, it referred to geographies of power.

Meanwhile, the region entered into the next mapping stage. Once, the eighteenth-century visionaries, officials and naturalists, claimed too optimistically that the mineral wealth around the Kolyvanskie palnts would never come to an end.[483] However, the mining district suggested a different morphology: any mining plant was threatened by potential depletion and could cease at any given moment.

"Never say never again" was becoming apparent from the early 1860s onward, when the mineral output declined and the resource depletion problems emerged inevitably. The exhaustion of silver and copper resources drove the region into a crisis. Analysis of the causes of depletion filled the pages of the professional and general press.[484] The emancipation of ascribed peasants and the ageing mining infrastructure made the production costs rise rapidly. The extensive exploitation of the easily accessible deposits emptied mines and profoundly changed local landscapes. Recruited in hope for a geological miracle, foreign experts failed to discover new reserves of precious metals.[485]

In order to compensate the income from the depleted mines, the Cabinet reconsidered its policies and priorities. As a result, the ruling groups began loosening control over the site. One of the first steps was to permit private companies to explore the mineral reserves of the district. Further on, the resettlement of peasants was gradually expanded. By taxing the settlers, the Cabinet received a great source of the regular income that covered the revenues expected from the mining.

After the large mining operations ceased, the mining (*gorno-zavodskii*) status of the region was revoked in 1896. Since then, the place was referred as the Altai district.[486] However, the keen interest in the potential reserves of the site that had been once a vast store of strategic metals remained on the agenda. Obviously, mineral mapping never stopped: "The Atlas of the Altai District" contained a number of mineral maps.[487] In order to compensate the loss of fabulous profits, the Cabinet established a

[483] *PSZ,* 1786, N. 16312; Pallas, *Über die Beschaffenheit der Gebirge*, 33.
[484] The factories produced less than one ton of silver in 1861. Keppen, *Statisticheskie tablitsy po gornoi promyshlennosti*; Strukov, *Kratkii ocherk Altaiskogo gornogo vedomstva*, 52; Iossa, "Prichiny upadka gornozavodskogo proizvodstva Altaia", 450-82; Golubev, "Likvidatsiia gornogo dela na Altae", 35-66.
[485] Cotta, von, *Der Altai. Sein geologischer Bau und seine Erzlagerstätten*.
[486] *PSZ,* 1896, N. 12738; Golubev, "Likvidatsiia gornogo dela na Altae", 35-66; Lukin, "Iz istorii perekhoda Rudnogo Altaia pod kontrol angliiskogo finansovogo kapitala", 48-59.
[487] *Atlas Altaiskogo gornogo okruga,* (1896).

special geological department and engaged top luminaries of the St. Petersburg University, who mapped the region anew.[488]

A couple of points can be made regarding the period from 1896 to 1917. On one hand, the region became a setting for the regular territorial practices: hundreds of thousands of peasants settled down in the steppes and mountain valleys; a range of mines and factories were given out to private rent; domestic and foreign companies mapped its resources, etc. Despite the depletion, the region still had a reputation of a mineral treasury. No wonder that some enthusiasts searched for oilfields in the Altai range.[489] On the other, the Cabinet and the regional agency kept tight control over natural resources of the place as before.[490] An important event came about almost unnoticed, when the Cabinet established a new unit with the same name "the Altai mining district" that was part of the larger Tomskaia mining region (*Tomskaia gornaia oblast*).[491]

What could have happened to this territory, if mineral deposits had come to an end earlier? Perhaps, it would have been treated as the rest of Siberia. No important colonization events, except charging the local natives with the fur tribute, would have occurred here prior to the massive peasant resettlement.

However, at a time, when most mining regions remained thinly covered by the general press and vaguely known to the public, the Altai district began attracting a fair amount of the wide public attention. What, apart from the status of the owner, drew popular attention to the place? Probably, what the rest of Siberia lacked: those were flatlands and elevations, favorable natural and climatic conditions, plentiful resources and other attractive features such as black soil, forests, rivers, etc. Silver mines were depleting, on the contrary, broad attention to the region was remarkably growing.

The Cabinet of His Majesty published several books in response to broad public interest in the Altai region.[492] The extensive chapter "The Lands of the Cabinet of His Majesty" in the book "Aziatskaia Rossiia" (1913) that appeared on the eve of "the 166th

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[488] Inostrantsev, *Geologicheskaia poezdka v Altaiskii gornyi okrug*; Polenov, *Ocherk raboty Geologicheskoi chasti Kabineta*.
[489] Kalitskii, "Ob altaiskoi nefti", 87.
[490] Mamontov, *Spisok rudnykh mestorozhdenii Altaiskogo okruga*; Freiman, *Otchet po zolotopromushlennosti Altaiskogo okruga*; Beresnevich, *Otchet po zolotopromushlennosti Tomskogo gornogo okruga*; Shostak, *Zolotopromyshlennost' v Tomskoi gornoi oblasti.*
[491] It had 180 goldfields. *Obshchii obzor glavnykh otraslei*, 39; *Pamiatnaia knizhka Tomskoi Gubernii na 1915 god*, 19.
[492] Rzhev, *Kratkaia vypiska iz vysochaishe komandirovannoi komissii v Altaiskii okrug*; Maleev, *Altaiskii gornyi okrug*; Strukov, *Kratkii ocherk Altaiskogo gornogo vedomstva*.

anniversary of these domains of the Romanovs' House" became the top of these publications.[493] This and other sources as well as Soviet inquiries treated the district as a pre-given region to such an extent that they dated its establishment with 1747. However, it is evident that the regionalization process started back in Demidov's time, when the combination of natural supplies and features set up a base for the long-running and systematic mineral exploitation.

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This chapter attempted to rethink the emergence of the Altai district in geographical terms. By revealing how the Berg Discourse worked on the ground, the detailed reading of the historical events suggested that the emergence of the region was anything but given. Whilst examining the region constructing, the chapter explored different layers of geographies of governance. Three consecutive stages of the place making were identified: firstly, a discrete spatial object appeared in imperial orbit, secondly, it turned into a compact area, and, finally, an economic region was formed.

What was singular about this case is that the Altai was second to no other district in the intensity of mapping efforts. No other mining unit, even the Nerchinskii district of the same status, would match the Altai in the speed of colonization. The creation of the region involved unprecedented administrative arrangements. The remote location was radically transformed and remodeled by the mining and administrative actions, settlement policies, etc. In this respect, the place was a clear index of the state efforts at the resource regionalization. The mapping took on various forms here, from classic resource exploitation and agrarian colonization to more subtle ways that the next two chapters will explore.

While the site shared much in common with other mining regions, it also manifested a range of own particularities. Its special rank in the territorial order of the country and other factors allows us to consider the region as distinctive. Other state and private districts units did not undergo the mapping procedures identical to that of the Altai. It had a double status: a private property of the monarch and an integral part of imperial Russia; its territory took up huge areas in western Siberia and was managed by the special executive agencies from the metropolis and on site. These two agencies had been able to keep the remote place practically intact for over a century.

[493] The chapter "Zemli Kabineta Ego Velichestva", 388-430.

Although all mining regions were equally imaginary constructs, this one had left deeper imprints than the ordinary administrative provinces. Spatial modernity played a crucial part in the creating and transforming this site over time. Particularly, in terms of power relations, there are few better illustrations of it than the Altai region, as it posed an exemplary case of the ruling elites' total control over space, landscapes, natural resources, social groups, and material practices.

In the aftermath of the Crimean war and in the course of the Great Reforms, the economic and social changes that took place during the late 1850s and 1860s, the Russian educated society directed the attention onto the imperial peripheries. The distance to remote areas decreased in the popular mind, as Mark Bassin has pointed out in regard to another important area of Russian colonization.[494] The Altai intensely began to take shape in the collective imagination and began to live a life of its own. Alexander von Humboldt proved right: simple names were easy to keep in mind. Once an undifferentiated imperial borderland, it was transformed into a place that proved the most expensive pearl in the Siberian crown of imperial Russia.

The next chapters will examine a more complex ways of mapping the Altai. We will explore how its landscapes were gradually turned to new symbolical purposes, as different groups and networks contested the ruling elites' power over the region. Time arrived for the place to become an imaginary public property. This stage of the region making will be done through the concerted efforts of the general public whose mapping work would imbue the Altai with a range of the symbolical meanings.

[494] Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East. 1840 – 1865*.

CHAPTER SEVEN
IN THE SHADOW OF THE GOLDEN MOUNTAINS

7.1. Making Sense of the Regional Imagery

After a journey that lasted half a year and took a few thousand versts, a giant jasper vase was delivered from the Kolyvanskaia lapidary factory to St. Petersburg in August of 1843. "The queen of vases" landed in one of the New Hermitage halls, where it can be seen at present.[495] (Figure 11) For over twenty years, the workers cut, engraved and polished a formless stone mass taming it into an elegant, though immense, bowl. The green vase provides a useful point of departure in exploring the ways through which the popular mind represented the Altai.

Symbolical geographies connect visions with places. However, the constructng of images and identities of the newly conquered territories would take on different forms.[496] Mental pictures of some peripheries emerged a few years or decades after they became incorporated into the empire, whereas many other areas failed to inspire any images at all. While most Siberian regions remained free of symbolic content, the Altai was freighted with a variety of different meanings.

Although many distant areas became more accessible to the public throughout the nineteenth century, the Altai remained under tight control of the ruling agencies that had constructed the place out of an undifferentiated space and imbued it with the particular identities. This framework set up the terms and limits in which images of the place had to be evolved. Although the groups with the less spatial outreach dealt with the Altai as a ready-to-go geographical product, their perception dramatically shaped the place in the public imagination.

Various images of the Altai contributed to "The Mental Atlas of the Russian Empire". Despite the Cabinet's strict control, several contrasting visions represented the place to the public throughout the nineteenth century: "Pearl of Siberia", "Russian Tibet", "Siberian Switzerland", "Athos", "the Land of White Waters", "the Golden Mountains", and "Russia's future California". Very few places in the country rivaled the diversity of these representations. The Altai presented an unusual case, but one that was deeply rooted in the imperial experience.

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[495] Its height is over 2,6 м, it weights 19 tons. The State Eremitage, Hall №128. Makarov, *Tsvetnoi kamen' v sobranii Ermitazha*, 96-97.

[496] See one of the recent studies: Kushko, Taki, Gromov, *Bessarabiia v sostave Rossiiskoi imperii.*

However, the regional imagery should not be treated as an eclectic assortment, but as tops of certain discourses and as forms of spatial knowledge.[497] It argues that the imagery served as a tool that repackaged natural resources of the region into a more accessible form of visions. Evidently, the imagery formed the further step in the resource region making.[498] Key to our interpretation is an assumption that mineral wealth had a great impact upon the production of the dominant symbols of the region.

It is through this research perspective that the following chapters raise some concerns about how the Altai became an important imaginative site. Who imagined it into existence, when and why did they do so? The chapters aim capture the contexts in which the region was presented to a wider audience. Particular mapping modes are examined in order to explore imperial discourses that generated these mental pictures. Through this set of images, the general public symbolically appropriated the Altai.

As an intellectual product, the visions were made by a stunningly diverse panorama of social groups that joined the project at various stages. Authors came from a wide spectrum of background: German naturalists, Siberian regionalists and the early urban intelligentsia, Old Believers and Orthodox missionaries, high ranked officials and mining officers, poets, exiles, runaways, settlers, and a "pseudo-Decembrist". Despite their different social status and cultural code, each group made a particular input in this large project on the spatial knowledge production. These representations turned the Altai into a multidimensional place.[499] Why did the region generate different images? How did the networks envision the construction of regional space and put new meanings of the Altai to work? What purposes did they pursue with the visions? Did the images get along with each other?

By highlighting the complex circuits of the knowledge production, the chapters offer an extended look at how the imagery evolved. It will be unpacked and interpreted as a dynamic interaction of particular discourses and ideologies, motifs and intentions of actors and networks that persuaded their agenda. In an attempt to bring various images of the place into dialog with each other, it argues that these groups culturally produced several Altais, each with a particular set of meanings that would change over time. To treat in detail each image is beyond the scope of these chapters. We will focus

[497] Cosgrove, Daniels, "Introduction: iconography and landscape", 1-10; Duncan, *The city as Text*, 233; Schein, "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework", 660-80.
[498] The inventing of the symbolical representation of the place poses a part of its regionalization. *IEHG*, XI, 136-50.
[499] Tuan, *Space and Place*, 178.

on two major representations that constituted the bulk of the imagery: the Golden Mountains and Siberian Switzerland. Along with locating with some precision the moments when they emerged, we will consider a variety of contexts in which they were perceived and consumed.

Deprived of a right and chance to benefit from the natural riches of the place, the educated society (*obshchestvo*) intensely employed imaginary geographies in order to gain own spatial control over Altai and manipulate its vast economic resources. The unusual diversity of the images mirrored their attempt to claim the district. It is through the images that different networks visualized the place. It is through these images that Russian nationalists and Siberian regionalists contested the Altai from its powerful owner; educated provincial networks presented themselves as culturally equal to residents of the metropolis; and the Orthodox believers sought dominance over secular groups and the non-Russian natives, etc. The examining of the imagery allows us to ask an awkward question: who owned whom when: the sovereign owned the empire, or, the other way around, the imperial subjects owned the emperor?

Before we turn to the images, a brief historical overview of the visualizing of the Altai is in order. Up until the closing decades of the nineteenth century, its representations circulated by the textual means without actual visual support.[500] Assigned by the Cabinet to draw the scenes of the Kolyvanskie factories, Vasilii Petrov is regarded as the first painter whose brush put the Altai ranges on the canvas in the early nineteenth century. Apparently, his works were not familiar to the wide public.[501] The same regards Egor Meier, a painter and a participant of the geological expedition.[502] Rare views of the Altai range appeared in the periodical "The Sibirskii Vestnik" in the 1820s.[503] The travel report of British painter Thomas Atkinson, who visited the district in the 1850s, posed an exclusive opportunity to present the place to wide audiences. The Russian editors, however, published his more exotic looking illustrations of Central Asia.[504] (Figure 12)

Only since the 1870s on, the public experienced the Altai Mountains through the medium of photography. All that early photographers had to do was to pack the

[500] This case confirms that the images may float without any visible means of support. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?* 85.
[501] Tokarev, *Khudozhniki Sibiri,* 14-21.
[502] His illustrations appeared in: Tchihatcheff, *Voyage Scientifique dans L'Altai Oriental*.
[503] Spasskii, "Puteshestvie po iuzhnym Altaiskim goram v 1809 godu", 29-64.
[504] Atkinson, *Oriental and Western Siberia: a Narrative of Seven Years Explorations;* in Russian: Atkinson, "Puteshestvie po russko-kitaiskoi granitse".

highland into a classic Alpine frame. The public could consume the views of Siberian Switzerland through the mass printed lithography, illustrations in academic and general publications, on postcards, etc.[505] Yet, there was an exception: published amidst a visual wave, the first Altai guidebook (1901) did not contain a single picture.

Figure 11. "The Queen of Vases" from the Kolyvanskaia lapidary factory.

The views of the Altai made various geographical descriptions of Siberia more entertaining, although the authors and readers were well aware that not all Asiatic Russia looked like the Swiss valleys. Sometimes, such illustrations would take up the largest part of all visual materials of a publication.[506] The authors' motivation was clear; the readership would find it more pleasant to study the picturesque valleys and snow covered peaks than to quickly leaf through the banal and boring views of the Siberian provincial towns that barely differed from each other. The Trans-Siberian Railroad guidebook ("*Putevoditel po Velikoi Sibirskoi zheleznoi doroge*") became the top medium of visualizing the region at the turn of the century.[507] Since the railroad went across the northern and flat parts of the district, passengers could not see the mountainous landscapes out of the train windows. However, the readership could enjoy the wonderful Altai views from the very first pages onward.

[505] Views appeared in: Iadrintxev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, Semenov, *Zhivopisnaia Rossiia*, XI; Dolgorukov, *Putevoditel' po vsei Sibiri*; Golovachev, *Zapadnaia Sibir'*; Anuchin, *Velikaia Rossiia*, etc.
[506] It was the case in: Golovachev, *Zapadnaia Sibir'*; Anuchin, *Velikaia Rossiia; Aziatskaia Rossiia*, II.
[507] Dmitriev-Mamonov, *Putevoditel' po Velikoi Sibirskoi zheleznoi doroge*.

7.2. The Resurrection of the Precious Mountain

We have discussed earlier the vision of the golden mountain that posed one of the dominants in Muscovite resource geographies. Russians painstakingly gathered nuggets of information about the deeply desired mountain that ws apparently crammed with precious metals. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the location of the imaginary Russian El Dorado wandered across several countries as different as China, Mongolia, Central Asian khanates, and northern Afghanistan.

The ongoing territorial expansion added a particular location to imperial Russia that would materialize this fantastic image. Moreover, it was not about a single mountain: an entire golden range came into view. However, the territorial expansion was not the single reason behind this special place. Those were complex circuits of the spatial knowledge production that formed the major driving force behind the emergence of the Golden Mountains on Russian mental maps.

This chapter attempts to capture the constructing of the Golden Mountains, the most discursively intense vision of the Altai. It highlights the uneven and negotiated ways and processes in which situated knowledge about the Golden Mountains was produced and consumed.[508] It is our argument that the Enlightenment scientists' random interpretation of the native languages had wider historical implications, which turned the native place name into a bright mental picture. Two important and sensitive mapping processes will be outlined that were at work. On the one hand, the ruling groups closely associated the geographical name "the Altai" with gold. On the other, the cultural appropriation of the non-Russian peripheries remained on the imperial agenda, as well, so that the geographical imagination mapped the mountain range that surrounded the Kolyvanskie factories as the Altai.

It is evident that Russian sources associated the place name "Altai" with neither gold nor the Kolyvanskie plants prior to the late 1740s, when the factories became part of the monarch's private domain. Whilst Demidov was extracting copper in this frontier, it was mapped as an allegedly empty space: "wild places that belong to nobody and were owned by Tatars".[509]

In August of 1734, the members of the Second Kamchatka Expedition, Iohann Georg Gmelin and Gerhard Friedrich Müller, two German scholars in the imperial service, visited Demidov's factories. During a brief sojourn, I.-G. Gmelin would take

[508] On situated knowledge see Livingstone, Withers, *Geography and Enlightenment*, 11-28.
[509] Kirilov, *Tsvetushchee sostoianie Rossiiskogo gosudarstva (1727)*, 281

a couple of notes about the copper mines and mention the Russian names of nearby hills.[510] Back then, there were no signs of precious metals around the area. Neither Demidov nor the central government referred to it as the Altai. There was not a single reason for Gmelin to register this name in the daily records.

No earlier Russian document referred to the Altai as gold either. The invention of this place began much earlier, and owed substantially to the efforts of the Siberian draftsman Semen Remezov. This serviceman constructed his Great Altai Rock basing on the native Turkic and Mongolian sources, as discussed above. If aware of any reference to gold, he would have customarily reflected it on the maps in the same way as he depicted the imaginary golden mountain under the Mongolian command.

Obviously, up until the late 1740s, not a single Russia source indicated that the Altai meant gold. Otherwise, the well-informed experts Vasilii Tatishchev and Wilhelm de Gennin, the supervisors of the Siberian mining factories, would not have ignored the native place name with a clear mineral background.[511] Moreover, Tatishchev was convinced that gold was unavailable in Siberia, as it could only be discovered in the mountains located of the warmer climatic zones.[512] On the contrary, fond of analyzing the non-Russian toponyms, Tatishchev interpreted the Altai as a sum of the Turkic words in two different ways:

either *alty* (six) + *ai* (month) or *alty* (six) + *tau* (mountains).[513]

Nothing indicated the presence of gold in this toponym from the opposite side either. Then, the south of the Altai range formed a political borderline between East Mongolians, subjects of the Chinese emperor, and the independent West Mongolian Zunghars. Assigned with the task of mapping China's northwestern borderlands, the Jesuit missionaries surveyed Mongolia firsthand and produced a series of maps in the early decades of the century. Their maps contained ordinary data about the Altai.[514]

However, after the Kolyvanskie factories of the Russian monarch started producing hundreds of puds of gold and silver per year, scientific networks revised their findings

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[510] Gmelin, *Expedition ins unbekannte Sibirien*, 136-141. Those were: Kolyvanka, Sinaia Sopka, Pichtova and Ploska gora.
[511] Gennin, *Opisanie Ural'skikh i Sibirskikh zavodov 1735 goda,* 611-29.
[512] Tatishchev, "Lexikon", 291.
[513] Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy po geografii Rossii,* 49; "Lexikon", 161.
[514] The regional map „Huiteme Feuille particuliere de la Tartarie Chinoise, qui est le commencement du Pais des Tartares Eluts" referred to 'Altai alin-i dube' (Altai mountains). Fuchs, *Der Jesuiten-Atlas der Kangshi-Zeit,* 136; Bernard, "Note complementaire sur l'Atlas de K'ang-hi", 194-199.

in order to maintain their status as the makers of credible knowledge. Both Gmelin and Müller made new observations regarding the Altai. In the late 1740s, Iohann Gmelin referred to the mountain range around the Kolyvanskie plants as "*Altanskie"* or Golden as an explanation of the incredible mineral wealth.[515] In 1764, Müller concluded that:

> "*Alta* means gold in the Mongolian and Kalmuck languages, and I assumed that gold should be available in those mountains. My guess turned out right for the Kolyvanskie Voskresenskie factories".[516]

Although both notes posed the earliest written reference to the Altai as the Golden Mountains, there is a clear time lag between the scholars' trip in 1734 and the suggestions made afterwards. To neither Gmelin nor Müller, the Altai resonated with gold until the factories began mining large amounts of precious metals.

How can the mechanisms of making the Golden Mountains be captured? Remarkably, the explorers based the credibility of their statements on the native sources, although none of the prominent scholars was familiar with the languages of Central Asia. In doing so, Gmelin and Müller created the so-called situated geographical knowledge by manipulating a material item and the presumed meanings of the non-European words. Apparently, this interpretation resulted from a multilayered translation from the native tongues into Russian, then German. Read through the lens of material concerns, the Turkic and Mongolian *altyn* (gold, golden) suddenly mattered to what was known now about the factories and the surrounding mountains.

Even though this word actually stands for gold and its derivates, the representing of the Altai as the golden mountains required to resolutely reduce *altyn* to *alt*. The makers of the vision did not hesitate to cut it down in order to reach the desired effect. Such an operation is mostly harmless in the Slavic languages, e.g. in Russian, a painless procedure reduces *zoloto* to *zlato*. However, in the agglutinate Mongolian and Turkic languages, further words can be made only if the basic root remains intact. Neither a half nor parts of the root allow the further production of additional elements of speech. However, a free interpretation of the indigenous lexicon empowered the naturalists to turn the combination of *alt* (yn) + *tau* (mountains) into the desired *altai*.

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[515] Quoted after the Rusian translation: Gmelin, *Perevod s predisloviia k Pervomu tomu Flory Sibirskoi*, 19-21. Gmelin's work appeared in 1747, Russian translation is dated with 1749.
[516] Miller, "Iz'iasnenia o nekotorykh drevnostiakh v mogilakh naidenykh", 520-22. Dated with 1764.

The broad meanings of *altai* in the Mongolian and Turkic culture dismiss the utilitarian reading suggested by the men of letters. This notion comprises two major meanings. The first one is sacral, for it stands for the spirit that owns the place and dwells in mountains.[517] Secondly, *altai* is a multisided spatial concept with the coherent meanings: an inhabited world, space in the broad and narrow sense, home, territory, a type of the highland landscape, a country, motherland, a nomadic settlement, etc.[518] None of these meanings relates to the material items and to gold in particular.

It is evident that the image of the Golden Mountains came into view after the grand-scale mining production started in this remote site. From 1748 through 1759, the output of gold reached 1430 kg, an equivalent of 1 mio rubel. [519] This single fact heavily outweighed all less material arguments, in particular, the obvious fact that the factories originally produced silver.

However, the specific interpretation of the native geographical name started spreading in use among the highest officials. The golden semantics of the Altai would occasionally emerge on the very margins of imperial discourses. In the report to the empress Catharina, a high ranked Cabinet official, Count Alsufiev referred several times to the mountain range that surrounded the mining plants as *Altanskie*.[520] Strictly speaking, it was not the single way to map the site. Another source from the period suggested an alternative and simpler approach. The Siberian official Fiodor Soimonov mapped the Kolyvanskie factories simply as the "golden bottom" (*zolotoe dno*).[521] Iohann Schloezer, the Berg-College president, labeled the Kolyvanskie plants as "the Russian Potosi" referring to the prominent Mexican silver mines, but, apparently, the purely colonial borrowing gained little currency in the ruling networks.[522]

Nevertheless, Russian everyday culture offered a more convenient way of mapping the Altai. It seems that the ruling elites did not have to study the German scholars' works in order to borrow the reference to gold. A piece of the Mongol-Tatar cultural heritage, the well-known coin *altyn* had been an integral part of everyday life since the early modern time.[523] Although minted in copper and later in silver, this small

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[517] Anokhin, *Materialy po shamanstvu*, 1, 14-15, 76, 78-79, 80-84; *Oirotsko-russkii slovar',*17; Potapov, *Altaiskii shamanizm*, 145, 200-1.
[518] Kazakevich, *Sovremennaia mongol'skaia toponimika*, 8, 15.
[519] *PSZ*, 1761, N. 11185.
[520] Ibid.
[521] Soimonov, "Drevniaia poslovitsa Sibir' – Zolotoe dno", 449-476.
[522] Quoted from: Men'shenin, *Ob uspekhakh gornogo promysla v Rossii*, 50.
[523] Equal to three kopeks. Altyn became part of financial system since the late 14th century, it circulated widely since 1654. Spasskii, *Altyn v russkoi monetnoi sisteme*, 12-20.

item could simply bridge material structures and imaginary geographies, as the Tatar word *altyn* means gold. As part of common communication, it could have strengthened the special meaning of the Altai Mountains. In other words, the impact of the Mongol-Tatar heritage in the eighteenth century was sufficient enough to associate the remote highland with gold.

This early case of mapping the non-Russian periphery reveals how imperial discourses would valorize certain forms of spatial knowledge and ignore the others.[524] Dominant styles of the resource mapping bridged the otherwise unbridgeable cultural gaps between the metallurgical plants and the vernacular etymology. The Enlightenment scholars demonstrated the utility of linguistic enquiry to an understanding of the site and provided what was judged credible facts about it. The references to the native languages were used as a method to maintain the naturalists' status of the respected knowledge makers. Although both Gmelin and Müller were field scientists, their interpretation of the Altai was neither a result of direct contacts with the locals nor did it come after the observation of the non-Russian cultures. The naturalists were not reliant upon native informants and local knowledge, whereas the Golden Mountains posed a net outcome of bringing together the valuable material substance and landscape. The credibility of the native tongues, it appears, was manipulated in order to explain vast mineral reserves around the mining plants.

7.3. The Lure of the Chinese Manuscript

After hibernating on the margins of upper geographies, the Golden Mountains moved to the focus of wider public attention. It came about due to a couple of events set in motion by another German scientist Peter-Simon Pallas, the member of the Imperial Academy of Sciences. In late summer of 1771, he visited the Kolyvanskie factories and "the Altaische Erzgebürge" (*Ore Mountains*), a must in the Academic expedition's itinerary.[525]

A key event behind the emergence of the Golden Mountains in the Russian imagination occurred in 1781, when Pallas launched a new series in geography and ethnography titled "Neue Nordische Beiträge zur physikalischen und geographischen

[524] Livingstone, Withers, Introduction, *Geography and Enlightenment*, 15, 20.
[525] A sickness disabled Pallas from traveling much in the nearby areas. His Russian student failed to bring along anything worthy from a scientific excursion. Pallas, *Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des Russischen Reichs*, pt. 2, 205-208.

Erd- und Völkerbeschreibung, Naturgeschiche und Oekonomie". Along with other materials for the first issue, he chose „*The Description of the Altai Mountains from the Chinese Book „Daizan-i-tun-Dihi*" translated from Chinese into Russian by the deceased interpreter Illarion Rossokhin no later than 1759.[526] This time, the exotic text was translated into German.

The writing depicted a concrete border area between Russia and China. Geographical location of the place seems proper; local toponyms were given in detail. On a whole, the data corresponded to the one on the French Iesuits' maps.[527] The frequent use of the Manchu *alin* (mountain) indicates that the source could be dated no earlier than the mid-seventeenth century, when the Manchu seized power in China.

What drew Pallas' attention to this translation, apart from his actual visit to the „Altaische Ore Mountains"? Of course, ‚le reve chinois', the Chinese fashion in European culture of the late eighteenth century added to his decision to publish it.[528]

However, the writing started with a direct reference to the Altai Mountains that explains the scholar's interest in this source. After his trip, Pallas depicted the Kolyvanskie plants as the wealthiest mining site of imperial Russia.[529] The introduction remark in the Chinese text added the credibility to his statements:

> "'Altai=alin' is a compound word, whose first half is Mongolian, and means gold, another is Manchurian, means a mountain, thus the meaning of the word is a golden mountain.
>
> *(„Altai=alin ist ein zusammengesetztes Wort, dessen erste Hälfte mongolisch ist, und golden bedeutet; die andere aus dem Mandschurischen abstammende, bedeutet ein Gebürge, so dass der Sinne des Wortes ein goldenes Gebürge ausdrückt*").[530]

To Pallas, the Chinese writing served as an intellectually convincing source that would explain the outstanding concentration of precious metals at the plants. The eastern text revealed the presumed golden semantics of the Altai in the same way the German explorers interpreted the native toponym. In particular, this pointed neither to Chinese nor Manchu, the dominant languages of the Quing empire, but to the colonial Mongolian ethymology. The subtle difference between the Mongolian *altyn* and *altai*

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[526] *Beschreibung des altaischen Gebürges,* 223-230.
[527] Index to Map 11 "Tsevan Araptan". Fuchs, *Der Jesuiten-Atlas der Kangshi-Zeit.*
[528] Widenor*, Russia and 'le reve chinois'.*
[529] Pallas, *Über die Beschaffenheit der Gebirge,* 33.
[530] *Beschreibung des altaischen Gebürges,* 223.

was hardly a point of question for the Chinese compilers, the same way as it was for the European men of letters.

Further on, the description provided a set of the iconographical cliches that would match any distinctive highland: „its height reaches the clouds and the Milky Way", „mother of all mountain ranges", and „eternal snow that lasts over summer".

How reliable was this geographical compilation? It is argued here that it blended facts and fantasies about the highlands that lay far behind the Great Chinese Wall. Huge spaces of Inner Mongolia and Gobi Desert separate China proper and the Altai Mountains. Prior to the mapping and mountaineering of Central Asia that launched in the late nineteenth century, its highlands posed a domain of imaginary geographies to Europeans, Russians as well as Chinese.[531]

Obviously, the description meant another range that was at play. Located between Takla-Makan Desert and the Tsaidam area in North West China, the mountain range *Altyn-Tag* can be painlessly translated from Mongolian as „a golden mountain". Gold was mined in the Altyn-Tagh since the ancient time.[532] In the iconographical sense, the Altyn-Tag would perfectly match the Chinese description in terms of gold, eternal snow, and extreme heights, since ist peaks rise to over 6 000 meters, whereas the highest peak of the Siberian Altai is about 4 500 meters. Again, the subtle difference between the Altai and the Altyn-Tag would hardly be a question for the authors, who sat behind the Great Wall.

The making of the Golden Mountains shows how the Enlightenment naturalists would valorize certain sources and forms of spatial knowledge. By doing so, they ignored the other, less attractive and spectacular sources. The following story makes it evident. In 1712, a delegation of the Chinese diplomats traveled across Siberia to the Lower Volga River. The extended report by the Chinese official Tulishen appeared in St. Petersburg in 1764, attached was a rough drawing of the itinerary that should be rather considered a mental map.[533] The map referred to *aeltai shan'* ("A-eul-t'ai shan", the transcription of the Altai Mountains) located between the Mongolian Selenga River as well as the Siberian Irtysh and Yenissei Rivers. If the Altai as the Golden Mountains

[531] Hedin, *Southern Tibet. Discoveries in Former Times*, III, VII.
[532] Murzaev, *Priroda Sin'tsiana*, 337.
[533] The delegation came to visit the Kalmyk Khan Aiuka. "Opisanie puteshestviia, koim ezdili Kitaiskie poslanniki v Rossiiu, byvshee v 1714 godu u Kalmytskago khana Aiuki na Volge". Reproduced in: *RKO*, I, 437-483. "Karta puteshestviia Kitaiskikh poslov v Rossiiu sochinennaia imi i pechatannaia v Pekine, s podpisaniem imian po Kitaskomu proiznosheniiu". The map was discussed in: Cahen, *Les Cartes de la Sibirie au XVIIIe siècle*, No. 50, 136-145.

had been a piece of Chinese collective geographies, it would have been appeared in this historical document with such an extension. Since the Altai Shan' in Tulishen's report indicated no references to gold, it went unnoticed by the learned public. This source allows regarding the publication by Pallas as a single piece of Chinese knowledge about the Altai.

In a further sense, the eastern writing should be treated as a sum of real data in terms of the location of the Altai range and purely imaginary geography in terms of the iconographical details. Pallas' reliance upon it is understandable: as a source of spatial knowledge, it formed the ultimate truth to the Enlightenment naturalist. It is evident that Pallas did not bring this piece of knowledge from the Academic expedition. On the contrary, he invented it out of slippery imaginary geographies in his study room in the imperial capital. He might also have considered the observations of his academic predecessors, Gmelin and Müller. An elusive link between the material reference and the place set up a discursive code of the Golden Mountains.

The tendency to link the native place names with the potential local resources was a regular practice in the period. The late eighteenth century explorers baptized one of the Aleutian Islands "Mednyi" because of pieces of copper that they came across on the coast.[534] Another geological expedition mapped the Zeravshan River in Central Asia in hope that its name, which presumably meant 'dispersed gold' in Arabian, would prove right.[535]

This case demonstrates how the learned networks in the imperial service engaged in the production of spatial knowledge that powerfully shaped what was known about this periphery. What united Müller, Gmelin, Pallas, and others was the reliance upon their analytical skills and the conclusions they made. The blend of the colonial etymology, imaginary geographies, and the multilayered translation (native languages, Chinese, Russian, German) eventually pinpointed the golden mountain that Muscovite servicemen desperately sought after in a concrete location. The image made by the respected scientists literally glued the meanings of gold on the Altai range.

The newly coined Golden Mountains gradually filtered through to the educated public. How did the contemporaries respond to this appealing mental picture? As soon as popular imagination seized on the image, Pallas' publication immediately became a

[534] *Novyi i polnyi geograficheskii slovar' Rossiiskogo gosudarstva, ili Leksikon,* pt. III, 265.
[535] Bogoslovskii, "Zapiska o dolinakh Zeravshana", 11-12.

textual matrix reproduced verbatim in various descriptions, textbooks and accounts.[536] Surprisingly, this imagining of the Altai quickly found the way into a range of geographical and geological literature that depicted the Kolyvanskie factories and this part of empire.

However, it was a piece of imperial poetry that employed the Golden Mountains in the most notable way. Gavriil Derzhavin, the ex-governor and poet, used this image in the huge ode "Felitsa" written in 1789 and dedicated to the empress Catharina. The poet's imagination suggested a remarkable pattern in power geographies:

"Prestol eio na Skandinavskikh,
Kamchatskikh i zlatykh gorakh".[537]

After several years of governing the northern Olonets province that had many metallurgical plants, Derzhavin was well advanced in the mining matters. He presented the local ridge as the Scandinavian Mountains, drew the imaginary line straight eastwards to the mountainous peninsula of Kamchatka, and abruptly directed the line southwards to the Altai range. By suggesting a new geographical frame, he symbolically re-established the Russian sovereign's throne on the natural elevations. In order to emphasize the mountains' firmness and solidity, he rhymed them with the pillars (*gorakh - stolbakh*).

The Golden Mountains provided a powerful metaphor for representing the Altai range and the mining site for public consumption. Despite a blinding materiality of the image, however, there was one single sober voice. Grigory Spasskii, the ex-mining officer of the Kolyvanskie factories and the publisher of "Sibirskii Vestnik", pointed out that the golden meanings of the Altai originated from a wealth of local silver and gold.[538] His hardly audible words remained unheard by collective geographies that tended to valorize certain forms of spatial knowledge by ignoring the others.

7.4. The Charming Power of Imaginary Geographies

Probably, the impact and shine of the representation could pale gradually. However, in the early 1830s, the image saw a distinct renaissance with an increased public interest in Alexander von Humboldt's journey to Siberia and the Altai that posed

[536] Renovants, *Mineralogicheskie izvestiia o Altaiskikh gorakh,* pt.1; German, *Sochinenia o Sibirskikh rudnikakh i zavodakh,* pt, 2, 233; Maksimovich, Shchekatov, *Geograficheskii slovar' Rossiiskogo gosudarstva*, pt. 1, 138-39; Ziablovskii, *Noveishee zemleopisanie,* pt. 1, 39.
[537] Derzhavin*, Sochineniia, I,* pt. 1, 274.
[538] Spasskii, "Kommentarii k perepiske Schletsera i Laksmanna", 329.

an important element in his works on Central Asia's topographies. By widely using Pallas' reference to the Golden Mountains, he added more insights about the Altai.[539]

The coverage of the trip revived the Golden Mountains on popular mental maps.[540] More important is Humboldt's position in a network of the credible knowledge producers. His status, authority, and celebrity were the most significant points for the popular imagination. Humboldt's enormous academic weight would add great significance to his smallest remarks. However, his influence on the knowledge making was limited in the less spectacular cases. The scientist strongly believed that the Altai actually stood for the Ektagh, a mountainous Asian area mentioned in a sixth century Byzantine chronicle.[541] Moreover, Humboldt attempted to replace the terms of the Little and Grand Altai with the Ektagh and Southern Altai, respectively, which, as he believed, were more appropriate in terms of geography. Although some would use his suggestions, the Ektagh stayed neither on maps nor in popular memory.[542]

Humboldt's impact on the producing of spatial knowledge engraved the reputation of the Altai as the Golden Mountains in the public mind. Furthermore, the numerous similar references in the Russian edition of Carl Ritter's "Die Erdkunde" maintained the credibility of the image.[543] This work became as a matrix of the Golden Mountains for several educated generations, the same way Pallas' publication did so to his contemporaries.

By re-gaining widespread currency, the attractive image became a standard cliche in geographical writings. Larger and more diverse mainstream audience trusted in its credibility. Popular books chorused Humboldt's reference to the Byzantine chronicle.[544] Of course, the transition from the academic sources to the popular imagination entailed multiple losses. The popular mind expanded a range of the languages in which the Altai presumably meant gold; those were now Old Chinese and Old Turkic, Uighur, Tangut, and Tungus languages. The Manchu *alin* was casually

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[539] Gumboldt, "O gornykh kriazhakh i vulkanakh vnutrennei Azii", 308-322; "O gornykh sistemakh Srednei Azii. Iz noveishego sochineniia barona Gumboldta." He also included a new translation of the Chinese writing publised by Pallas in his "L'Asie Centrale".

[540] *Puteshestvie barona Aleksandra Gumboldta, Erenberga i Roze v 1829 godu po Sibiri i Kaspiiskomu moriu*. Rose, *Mineralogisch-geognostische Reise nach dem Ural, dem Altai*, 602-607.

[541] Gumbol'dt, *Kartiny prirody*, pt. 1, 69; *Tsentral'naia Aziia*, 133.

[542] It remained in circulation approx. until the 1880s: Voenno-statisticheskoe obozrenie Rossiiskoi imperii, 5, 24; Veniukov, *Opyt voennogo obozreniia russkikh granitz v Azii*, 212.

[543] Ritter, *Erdkunde. Buch II. Ost-Asien*, pt. 2; *Zemlevedenie Azii Karla Rittera, Geografiia stran*; *Gornaia strana Nebesnogo khrebta (Tian-Shan'), prostranstvo mezhdu Tian'-Shanem i Altaem*, II; *Altaisko-Saianskaia sistema v predelakh Rossiskoi imperii,* III.

[544] *Karmannaia knizhka luibitelei zemlevedeniia*, 244; Dolgorukov, *Putevoditel' po Sibiri*, 305, etc.

transformed into a more comfortably sounding *amin*, whilst the Altai figured either as the *Antai* or as the unrecognizable *Aktag/Ektag, Ek-tag/Ek-tel*. If necessary, people would easily blend two different physical landmarks into one entity: "the Chinese are familiar with the Altai as the Tien Shan that means golden mountains".[545]

Humboldt's reputation loomed large over the Golden Mountains since the 1830s, but the link with the scientific luminary could be barely traced a few decades later. Firmly established in the popular imaginations, the representation advanced without referring to the prominent thinker.[546] Charmed by imaginary geographies and blinded by the frequent references to the eastern exotic sources, the educated public hardly considered the obvious fact that formally the golden mountains were literally dispersed all over the Russian empire. Over the last centuries, it incorporated the wide areas inhabited by the Turkic-speaking groups. Their territories often contained the place names based upon *altyn*. The areas stretching from the Volga River to East Siberia accommodated a number of the linguistically perfect golden mountains: *Altyngana, Altyn-tau, Altyn-imel',* two *Altyn-tiube*.[547] If the natives meant to link a place name with a material substance, they did so without using a complex encoding style of the intellectual explorers. However, none of these places had gold, so, they were unworthy of popular attention.

A new stage of mineral mapping started when large reserves of gold were discovered in the Altai range in the early 1830s. At the Kolyvanskie plants, gold was extracted from the auriferous silver in the course of a complicated mining procedure, now it could be directly exploited from the deposits. From the 1830s through the 1860s, gold production attained ca. 900 puds annually. [548] In a sense, it exemplified the point, when the emperor became a master of his own golden mountains as the title of the Russian folksong "When I only had golden mountains" ("*Kogda b imel zlatye gory*") indicated.

The intensive extracting of precious metals fueled the further life of the representation, whereas the material referent – gold – provided supportive means for the utilitarian interpretation of the native name. However, imaginary geographies barely cared about one obvious fact: the mountain ranges in the Nerchinskii district in East

[545] *Aziatskaia Rossiia,* I, 391.
[546] Klements*, Drevnosti Minusinskogo muzeia,* 71.
[547] Semenov, *Geografo-statisticheskii slovar',* I, 80-82.
[548] It equals to 14 400 kilo gold. Semenov, *Geografo-statisitcheskii slovar*', I, 77-80.

Siberia had even larger gold deposits than those in the Altai. Due to the considerable production of gold, the silver mining was temporarily ceased in the Nerchinskii district. In this light, the Altai range should rather stand for silver mountains.[549] However, the public mind would firmly connect it with gold.

The image reached an iconic status toward the closing decades of the century, despite a rapid decline of the mineral deposits and the end of the mining era in the Altai region that has been discussed above. The fundamental changes on-site hardly changed the irresistible power of the Golden Mountains. A discovery of the ancient Turkic runic scriptures on the stonewalls in Central Mongolia made this continuity evident. One of the scriptures referred to "the Altun-Iish Mountains". The linguists translated it as "golden mountains."[550]

Throughout the nineteenth century, popular geographies transformed the place-name into a verbal equivalent of the precious metal. [551] The Golden Mountains catered different imperial audiences with different backgrounds and tastes. This representation served as the chief imaginary medium through which information about the Altai region was supplied. Out of the entire imagery, only this one provided a point of contact between upper and low social geographies. Unlike other images, it easily traveled between spatial imaginations of diverse social groups. The Golden Mountains equally figured in official and academic publications, geographical writings and dictionaries, geological literature, guidebooks, school teaching materials, etc.[552] Pamphlets for the resettling Russian peasants were no exception either.[553]

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[549] The Altai district was considered the main silver-producing site in Russia. Kulibin, *Gorno-zavodskaia proizvoditel'nost' Rossii*, IX.

[550] Stone walls were dated with 6-7 centuries B.C. It reads, "This year I went to fight Tiurgesh, I passed through the Altun area and the river of Irtysh". Barthold*, Die historische Bedeutung der alttürkischen Inschriften,*1-36; *Inscription de l'Orkhon.* Dechiffrees par V. Thomsen**,** 110; Malov*, Pamiatniki drevnetiurkskoi pis'mennosti*, 27. 'Altai' is one of the oldest toponyms of Central Eurasia. See Vladimirtsov, "Geograficheskie imena orkhonskikh nadpisei", 169-74.

[551] When the Cabinet rented out parts of the district into private use, the companies were casually named as "the Altai golden mining enterprise", "the South Altai golden mining enterprise", "the Golden mining society Altai", etc. Strukov, *Kratkii ocherk Altaiskogo gornogo vedomstva*, 60-63; *Obshchii obzor gornozavodskoi promyshlennosti; Zolotopromyshlennoe obshchestvo "Altai*".

[552] Mamyshev, "Altai", 35-62*;* Semenov, *Geografo-statisitcheskii slovar*', I, 73; Mushketov, "Mineral'nye bogatstva", 225; *Altai i ego mineral'nye bogatstva*, 1; Shchepetov, *Altai. Proshloe i nastoiashchee gornoi strany*, 1; Tolstoi, Kondakov, *Russkie drevnosti v pamiatnikakh iskusstva*, 33; *Sibir' i transaziatskii zheleznyi put*', 23; Berezin, *Geograficheskie imena*, 107; Sapozhnikov, "Zolotoe ozero i zolotaia gora", 115; Loranskii, *Gornaia statistika*, 47; Golovachev, *Sibir'. Priroda, Luidi,* 12.

[553] *Rasskazy o zapadnoi Sibiri,* 49.

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The enduring image of the Altai as the Golden Mountains demonstrates the impact of the mineral framework on the mapping of the non-Russian peripheries. To some extent, the Berg Discourse was encoded in the colonial landscape and in the image of the fabulous mountains. Several things follow from this case. Academic networks played a seminal role in the making of the image. All available means were used to construct spatial knowledge that would seem credible. It posed a purely intellectual representation invented by the European naturalists, who based the credibility of their conclusions on the non-Russian and Eastern sources. The reputation of the respected scientists warranted the credibility of the Golden Mountains. Moreover, whereas the knowledge making authority granted these men of letters the status of experts, though they resorted to the means and sources that lay beyond their immediate competence.

The Golden Mountains case illustrates the ways in which scientific knowledge successfully moved from academic spaces of its making to the public sites of its consuming. During a few decades, the representation gradually descended from upper imperial and academic discourses downward. Although Russian culture's symbolic means were not involved in its production, it was well received by diverse audiences.[554]

The early Soviet decades would further cement the reputation of the Altai as the Golden Mountains. From the late 1920s onward, the archeologists excavated multiple golden and silver items out of the ancient graves hidden in the Altai valleys. The findings were labeled as "gold of Scythes" and placed in the State Heremitage.[555] While miners flooded the region in search of gold, the first Soviet thriller "The Golden Lake" was shot on the coasts of the local Teletskoe Lake.[556]

This image reveals how undemanding the imagination was in terms of the visual representation of the place. The imagery did not require visual proof. The next chapter explores the image of "Siberian Switzerland" that would illustrate in detail how the Golden Mountains looked from a distance.

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[554] In Russian, the notion of golden mountains refers to illusory promises. *Slovar' russkogo iazyka. Sostavlen Vtorym otdeleniem,* pt. 2, 858; Biriukov, *Dorevoliutsionnyi fol'klor na Urale*, 13.

[555] The Altai collection of the State Eremitage contains over 6,000 ancient items: Griaznov, "Raskopki kniazheskoi mogily na Altae", 217-9; idem, *Pazyrykskii kurgan*.

[556] "Zolotoe ozero" (Mezhrabpromfilm, 1935) directed by V. Shneiderov. Shneiderov, *Vosem' kinoputeshestvii*, 141-166.

CHAPTER EIGHT
SIBERIAN SWITZERLAND EMERGES ON MENTAL MAPS

8.1. The Elites' Image Goes Public

"Siberian Switzerland" formed an interwoven net of competing and conflicting discourses and ideologies. It is one of our central arguments that this representation meticulously disguised the Russian educated society's keen concerns with mineral resources of the Altai. The chapter argues that the landscape imagery posed an attempt of particular groups to force their way into the circle of spatial power holders.

It would be erroneous to assume that the society's interest in the region was purely aesthetical, although the place met usual criteria of the Alpine scenic beauty. Through imaginary geographies, various groups symbolically "shared" the mining district and its natural riches with the mighty imperial agencies. The makers of Siberian Switzerland would articulate their moods in the following way: "[…] the Altai areas of the Cabinet are considered the most fertile and richest in Siberia, and nobody can claim any rights upon them".[557]

How did the educated groups feel about the fact that the sovereign and the Cabinet kept this widely blessed area isolated from the rest of the country? How can that mixed range of feelings be captured that particular groups might have had towards the place and those who gained profits from it? The question can be reframed in the other way: was it a lack of interest, jealousy or joy for the monarch?

Although it is tempting to reduce the interpretation of the beautiful landscape image to the visible features – the snow-covered peaks and blue lakes – such a simplistic reading should be avoided for several reasons. Our approach does not treat the Altai as yet one more imperial venue to project the Alpine code. A close examination reveals a complex image open to a variety of possible readings. However, the chapter shifts our focus away from the landscape features toward mineral riches of the region. By interpreting Siberian Switzerland as part of the struggle over natural resources, it argues that the educated groups manipulated the Altai landscapes in order to make claims on the mining district. Thus, the emergence of this image revealed Russian nationalists' attempt to contest the place from the Cabinet, and, probably, the sovereign himself.

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[557] Petrov*, Zapadnaia Sibir'. Gubernii Tobol'skaia i Tomskaia,* 43.

Since the mid-eighteenth century on, "Switzerland" and "the Alps" formed the aesthetic categories in European culture, whereas all more or less attractive slices of the mountainous scenery from German Saxony to American Colorado were packed into the alpine frame.[558] Imperial elites intensely appropriated new cultural fashions; for the adherents of Romanticism, the Crimean and Caucasian mountains served as the main setting to create the Russian versions of the Alps.[559] Occasional travelers would depict the less prominent parts of the country as local Switzerlands.[560] But why waste cultural power of this prestigious image on the distant Siberian range, when the Caucasus Mountains successfully stood for Switzerland of imperial Russia?

Actually, it does not matter at all, who was the first to describe the Altai in the likeness of the Alpine landscape.[561] This case makes it evident, however, that only the agents of influential academic and imperial discourses generated spatial knowledge that the less powerful groups would receive and disseminate. In order to provide his readers with a fuller picture of the distant region, Alexander von Humboldt pointed out that the Altai district was three times as large as Switzerland.[562] Ever since, every traveler felt obliged to repeat his remark and add insights gathered on the ground.[563] The depiction of the Altai range as the Swiss Alps figured on the margins of the travel reports, academic and geological texts. It is unlikely that by using such cultural tropes officials and naturalists pursued other purposes than following the travelers' fashion.

Soon, however, the elites' trope would abandon the margins of professional literature, and popular mental maps embraced the arrival of Siberian Switzerland. This watershed event took place on the pages of "The Description of Siberia" (1862-1864) written by Ippolit Zavalishin.[564]

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[558] Groh, Groh, "Von den schrecklichen zu den den erhabenen Bergen", 92-149; Beattie, *The Alps. A Cultural History*.
[559] Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire*. *Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*.
[560] Martynov, *Zhivopisnoe puteshestvie ot Moskvy do Kitaiskoi granitsy*, 39.
[561] The report of the little-known painter Vasilii Petrov could serve well as a point of departure. In the early 1800s, he spent several weeks in the most remote parts of the Alta highland. "Ot peizazhista V. Petrova polucheno 18.12.1802 na imia Prezidenta Akademii Khudozhestv grafa Stroganova". Petrov, *Sbornik materialov dlia istorii Imperatorskoi Akademii khudozhestv*, 582-84. The Altai as Switzerland: Shangin, *Opisanie Kolyvano-Voskresenkikh rudnikov*, 3; Spasskii, "Puteshestvie po iuzhnym Altaiskim goram v 1809 godu", 29-64; Dmitriev, "Simfoniia natury v chas utra", 277-286.
[562] Gumbol'dt, *Tsentral'naia Aziia,* 142. I refer to the Russian edition (1915) of his "L'Asie Centrale" (1843).
[563] Gebler, "Zamechaniia o Katunskikh gorakh", 408-39; Helmersen von, „Über den Ural und Altai, 97-112"; *Reise nach Altai im Jahre 1834*, 45, 50, 72, 94; Shchurovskii, *Geologicheskoe puteshestvie po Altaiu*, 362; Prints, "Torgovlia russkikh s kitaitsami na r. Chue", 1-16.
[564] The controversial Ippolit Zavalishin (1809–1869) was the younger brother of the Decembrist Dmitrii Zavalishin. At the age of 17, Ippolit informed on his brother to the emperor.Whilst exiled to Orenburg, the

Figure 12. "Altyn Kool, Altai Mountains" by Thomas W. Atkinson, the 1850s.

8.2. Reading the Place in the Colonial Guidebook

The Moscow based "Society for Good Books Distribution" ("*Obshchestvo rasprostraneniia poleznykh knig*") provided the writing with a short note that it was received through M. Pogodin's assistance. It is unlikely that Michail Pogodin, one of the leading spokesmen of Russian official nationalism, would support a publication that diverged from his own views. In this light, "The Description of Siberia" enables us to capture the emergence of Siberian Switzerland as part of influential nationalist and imperial discourses.

Geographers point out that as spatial ideology nationalism manifests particular territorial facets.[565] The Great Reforms and dissemination of nationalist ideas widely shaped the society's perception of the remote areas. Such moods stimulated nationalists' closer engagement with the non-Russian peripheries.[566] Along with that,

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arrogant and self-centered man provoked provincial officers to join a fictitious secret society in order to report on them. In the further exile in East Siberia, he was used as a provoker. A man of low morale, he begged money from the wealthy Decembrists. In 1848, he was relocated to West Siberian Kurgan. In 1855, he was imprisoned for unruly conduct, snitching, and hard drinking. Court verdict did not allow him staying further in Kurgan. One can only speculate what happened between these events and the publication of "The Description of Siberia". Shtraikh, *Provokator Zavalishin;* Lotman, "O Khlestakove", 658 – 688.

[565] Williams, Smith, "The national construction of social space", 502-518; Murphy, "Regions as social constructs", 29; Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness*, 51.

[566] Nebol'sin, *Zametki na puti iz Peterburga*, 200.

the lower layers of the society turned to the reception of the Sublime aesthetics that moved from the Russian elites downwards. These factors were at play in our case.

Zavalishin's work can be loosely labeled as "the guidebook of colonial geographies", as it posed typical promotional literature that stressed the attractiveness of Siberia for potential settlers. The so-called panegyrists shaped the image of Siberia with hidden motifs and crammed the advertising literature with utopian visions, as Mark Bassin has pointed out in his seminal study on the Amur Region in Far East.[567] It is useless to guess which parts of the region the author visited in person and which ones he merely created by work of the imagination. In order to produce such an opus, a journey to all places was not necessarily required. The Siberian regionalist Nikolai Iadrintsev critically dismissed these "Potemkian villages" by pointing out that Zavalishin's eulogy resembled an Eden garden inhabited by Arcadian shepherds and nymphs dancing on the soft and silky grass. His Siberia presumably blossomed; local administration functioned amazingly well, etc.[568]

Apparently, Zavalishin used contemporary writings as well as official statistics for his work. However, imaginary geographies were too obvious on many pages. Without much effort, he relocated the world geography to the Siberian regions: Arabia moved to the Hunger Steppe, Jerusalem to Kainsk, Schwarzwald and Bohemia around Kuznetsk, Saxon Freiberg to Barnaul, Italy to the valleys of the recently conquered Zailiiskii area, etc. However, out of all associative and contrasting images produced by his vivid imagination, be it "Siberia as Russian Germany" or "the tsardom's inner Australia", it was Siberian Switzerland that stuck in the Russian popular mind for the years to come.[569]

What made this unusual cultural figure situate Switzerland in the Altai mining region, a complicated and dense place? Whether he was the first or the second in doing so matters less than the obvious fact that he borrowed the glamour vision from the upper cultural arsenal and integrated it into the use of the peripheral society. In spite of the multiple utopian elements, his work contained a range of discursive maneuvers regarding the Altai district. First, Zavalishin thoroughly mapped its mineral and natural

[567] Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East. 1840 – 1865*, 7.
[568] Iadrintsev, "Sibir' pered sudom russkoi literatury", 24.
[569] Zavalishin, I, 189; II, 45.

wealth. Second, he symbolically contested and appropriated the region and its resources through his image.

Remarkably, his father, Captain Irinarkh Zavalishin authored the geographical poem "The Short Description of the Russian State for the Youth" ("*Sokrashchennoe zemleopisanie Rossiiskogo gosudarstva dlia iunoshestva*", 1793). Since the childhood, Ippolit Zavalishin might have kept in mind his father's lines about the mineral wealth of the Altai:

"Altaiskie khrebty vo-pervykh predstavliaet;
Zmeevskii tut rudnik pred vsemi prevzoshel,
Rudokopatel v niom sto sazhen vniz soshel".[570]

However, times changed, and the recent depiction of the mountain range stood in a dramatic contrast to the one his father made in the Enlightenment age. The canons of the Alpine iconography included snowcapped peaks, lakes or rivers, valleys, cows, and peasants. Zavalishin loosely interpreted his Siberian Switzerland by focusing on the physical features of the mountains.[571]

The impact of his depiction is striking. Not a single illustration accompanied the work in the pre-visual age, yet his rhetoric launched the enduring life of the image in the Russian mind. None of Zavalishin's readers doubted the reality of the textual representation. None of them cared that this Switzerland came into view in the midst of the harsh environmental conditions of Siberia.

8.3. Siberian Switzerland Turns into the Golden Mountains

Zavalishin's passages about the Altai contained a mixed palette of moods that the representatives of the educated society shared in terms of the mining district. The nationalist-minded image reflected the author's ambivalent attitude to the mineral wealth and the beneficiaries of the region. Obviously, he was not alone in his attitude. An earlier traveler complained that it was impossible to find out the exact profits that the Cabinet gained from the Kolyvanskie mines and the fur tribute charged from the native inhabitants.[572] The lack of access to precious metals and other reserves inspired educated Russians to resort to imaginary geographies as a symbolical means to contest and appropriate the region. Zavalishin himself knew too well the limits of this attempted

[570] Zavalishin Irinarkh, *Sokrashchennoe zemleopisanie Rossiiskago gosudarstva*, 22.
[571] Zavalishin, I, 32-33.
[572] Nebol'sin, *Zametki na puti iz Peterburga*, 80.

contestation: “The Altai plants belong to the Cabinet of His Majesty and the artistic production of its lapidary factory cannot be a shared property”.[573]

The attitude of envy to the place was manifested in a number of ways. It seems that Zavalishin painstakingly avoided any reference to its official status by ignoring and tabooing it. He presented the Altai range and the southern districts of the Tomskaia province as a single entity, but not as the territory in the Russian monarch's private domain. Furthermore, he would refer to “the Barnaul mining district” without mentioning its actual status. Zavalishin employed a range of the territorial terms from the undifferentiated ones as “area”, “stripe”, “huge space”, and “a poetic corner” to the more concrete one: “the southern districts of the Tomskaia province”. In terms of presenting its size, the author would maximally stretch the readers' imagination in order to paint an enormous area that extended from the Kuznetsk taiga forest (the present Kemerovskaia oblast) to the Tian Shan in Central Asia.[574]

Predictably for the genre, Zavalishin depicted Siberia’s material resources in the exaggerated ways. In comparison, however, mineral wealth of the region was presented in a more praising style: “a material and soul treasure trove”, “an eternal aesthetical pleasure”, “a little Eden”, “balsamic highlands”, and “the admirable Altai”.[575]

Like no other contemporary text, this opus should have employed the image of the Golden Mountains. Despite the absence of this image, gold was figuratively dispersed across the pages in a form of “a truly golden bowl”, “the gold- bearing Altai”, “the Golden lake”, “the Golden mountain” (a reference to a single peak Altyn-Tagyn), and “there is plenty of gold here”.[576] Finally, the references to the precious metal culminated in the statement: *“*The Russian Altai boasts an abundance of gold”.[577]

His words sound particularly important, as they echoed an earlier remark by Vasilii Tatishchev, one of the Berg Discourse architects. At the dawn of empire building, he was concerned that gold had not been discovered in Russia proper yet.[578] Since then, imperial Rus’ stretched in all possible directions; absorbing and russifying

[573] Zavalishin, I, 73.
[574] Zavalishin, II, 2.
[575] Zavalishin, I, 208; II, 2, 18-19.
[576] Zavalishin, II, 4, 16, 184, 224, 239.
[577] Zavalishin, I, 37.
[578] Tatishchev, *Izbrannye trudy*, 127.

Siberian landscapes and resources. Now, at the height of the imperial age, Russia possessed plenty of its own precious metals. As contemporary commentators observed, the goldfields are too many to be counted (*nest' chisla*).[579] By basing their ambitions on the mineral wealth, nationalists constructed their spatial identities undisturbed by the fact that valuable resources were available only in the non-Russian peripheries.

Some observers constructed colonial deposits into a special geological layer, "the Russian golden-bearing formation" (*russkaia zolotonosnaia formatsiia*).[580] The territorial and mineral facets of the elites' identities went hand in hand, as discussed earlier. The elites projected the size of the Russian empire onto global mineral resources. Some commentators assumed that once the country took up one sixth of the earth, it was supposed to possess at least the sixth part of global gold reserves.[581]

The canonical Alpine depiction consisted of the aesthetic elements due to the lack of mineral resources in Switzerland. However, Zavalishin boldly re-interpreted it for his discursive goals. Unlike the original, Siberian Switzerland posed a realm of the limitless mineral deposits. The innovative image ably masked the keen material focus on resources of the Altai district that, as he pointed out, posed „a true metallic treasury of the country".[582] The author suggested that once the monopoly and privileges of a particular agency were abolished, the Altai would produce riches sufficient to ensure wealth for many generations for hundred years.[583] It is easy to figure out what imperial institutions he was pointing to.

Zavalishin's intentions, clear as well as less clear, could well be framed by current postcolonial thought that depicts colonial situations as everybody contesting everything (values, idenitities, symbols, etc.) from everybody else.[584] Why, then, not ask an admittedly awkward question: who and what belonged to whom and when, the empire to the emperor or, otherwise, the monarch to the imperial subjects? Obviously, the representatives of the educated groups sought the channels of control over imperial space and mineral resources. Such attemtps implied a symbolical appropriation of space and of those, who exercised ultimate power over it: „Who, among all earthly rulers, is

[579] Nebol'sin, *Zametki na puti iz Peterburga*, 107.
[580] Bogoliubskii, *Zoloto i ego zapasy*, 22.
[581] Ibid.
[582] Zavalishin, II, 235.
[583] Ibid., 237.
[584] Spurr, *The Rhetoric of Empire;* Cooper, Stoler, *Between Metropole and Colony*.

richer than the Russian tsar? Masses of all riches of the European sovereigns mean nothing in comparison to the value of his treasures.“[585]

As the coming decades indicated, Zavalishin’s opinion was not a single voice in the contestation. Although his opus stood in sharp contrast to the Siberian regionalists’ position, the attitude to the Altai was common ground for both sides. The members of the regional movement *oblastnichestvo* strongly disapproved the separate status of the district. Grigorii Potanin, the author of the Altai chapter in the posh publication “Zhivopisnaia Rossia” (1884), introduced the place simply and shortly as the Altai. Like Zavalishin, he ignored the term “district” and presented it as “the large and most interesting area of West Siberia”.[586] In spite of the critical dismissal of his style, the regionalists widely deployed this image along with a range of the descriptive tropes of exclusivity and abundance; the oblstniki looked forward to the developing of the mining and other industries in the region.[587]

In the meantime, the corruption of the Altai mining staff increased. The lack of proper control along with the ineffective management created a fertile soil for bribery within the local bureaucracy.[588] Contemporary experts demanded that all state-run mining districts and those under the Cabinet's management should be made available to private developers on equal rights.[589] Whilst Zavalishin skillfully concealed his critical remarks towards the Cabinet and the mining agency, others did it in a blunt way. In 1882, a book with a catchy title “The Altai, Russia’s Future California and its Local Orders” was published in Germany. Its title referred to California, a place of the booming gold fever. The publication uncovered abuse of power in the corruptive agency. It also contained a broad inventory of the region’s natural resources. The Altai was stated as the future California of Russia, but not the one of the emperor.[590]

It is evident that Siberian Switzerland received encouraging responses from the public and became a piece of collective knowledge. The educated society, military officers, naturalists, teachers, and others enthusiastically embraced Zavalishin’s invention[591]. It rooted quickly in popular imagination so that readers of the novel “In

[585] Nebol'sin, *Pokorenie Sibiri*, 170.
[586] *Zhivopisnaia Rossiia*, XI, 350.
[587] Quoted after *Literaturnoe nasledie Sibiri*, IV, 110-123, 158-186; Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, 57.
[588] Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, 392.
[589] Poletika, “O sposobakh k razvitiiu zolotogo promysla v Rossii”, 781-89.
[590] Otpetyi, *Altai, budushchaia Kaliforniia Rossii*, 83-84.
[591] Shechepetov, Altai. *Proshloe i nastoiashchee gornoi strany*, 7; Vol'skii, *Vsia Sibir*', 48-49; Babkov, *Vospominaniia o moei sluzhbe v Sibiri*, 410, Mushketov, *Mineral'nye bogatstva Altaiia,* 225-252.

the Altai" (1885) by Leonid Bliummer did not encounter many difficulties with locating "siberian Switzerland". The depiction of the region turned out a triumph of possessing colonial resources: "What riches are available here! There is everything here! Forest, wheat, tin, copper, silver, gold, malachite, precious stones! What reserves of coal, this gold of the nineteenth century! What fauna [...] what fishes. [...]!".[592]

Before concluding this part, let us turn to the question of how the images of Siberian and Caucasian Switzerland diverged from each other. Despite the same packing paper, they were generated by different discourses in different periods. Caucasian Switzerland served to the elite society as a widely recognized location for projecting the Alpine aesthetics. As Christopher Ely has recently shown, this cultural practice was driven by the attempted compensation of Central Russia's boring flatlands.[593]

It is unlikely that by using this attractive representation, provincial groups of West Siberia intended to compensate the local landscapes. Rather, the early provincial intelligentsia employed it as a symbolical tool for colonizing the non-Russian periphery and manifesting their growing cultural identities. The educated Siberians emulated the experience of central groups in an attempt to upgrade own social and cultural status. Along with that, it indicates that throughout three centuries of colonial presence in Siberia Russians developed a sense of a new regional identity that diverged from that of Central Russians.

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Siberian Switzerland marked the Altai on mental maps of Russian nationalists. On the whole, Zavalishin's work mirrored nationalists' close attention to the peripheries, in particular, to the territory under special control of the imperial agencies. This apparently harmless mental picture stood at the crossroad of conflicting imperial and nationalist discourses and posed a sophisticated attempt of redefining Siberian colonies. One of Siberian Switzerland's important implications is that it featured nationalists' efforts to convert the peripheral mountain terrains into an imaginary tool for their territorial debates.

Nationalist focus on the Altai indicated a further attempt to incorporate the non-Russian highland into the Russian spatial framework.[594] The representation captured

[592] Bliummer, *Na Altae,* 172-173.
[593] Ely, *This Meager Nature. Landscape and National Identity in Imperial Russia.*
[594] On how landscapes have articulated national identities in England: Daniels, *Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England*, 5.

nationalist geographies in the middle of mapping the region and claiming its material reserves. Not only did Zavalishin replace the Alpine cottages with the natives' smoky iurtas. By shifting the focus from the sublime mountains to the mineral wealth, he would further contest the district from the rulers. Siberian Switzerland confirms the suggestion of I-Fu Tuan that the images taken from the environment do not mean that it has 'determined' them in this way "nor need we believe that certain environments have the irresistible power to excite topophilic feelings".[595] Thus, imaginary geographies turned the place into a shared symbolical property of the Russian nationalists.

In terms of the spatial knowledge production, the image of Siberian Switzerland continued the tendency of valorizing the imperial Altai. Zavalishin's work, however, operated neither with the essential linguistic means of Russification of the peripheries, such as references to "zemlia russkaia", nor with concrete wordings and possessive pronouns "nash". At the dawn of the twentieth century, popular imagination would appropriate the Altai in a more direct way.[596]

Further dissemination of the landscape image by various groups suggests that the original resource driven motifs gradually became less important. In the late century, a need for the regional icons of sublimity changed the angles of the image. The groups of the lower social and economic status were in the midst of appropriating the Sublime aesthetics. More individuals and groups, who were not involved with the district, traveled to the Altai with the professional, educational, and touristic goals: journalists, regional naturalists, professors of the University of Tomsk, school teachers and students from Siberian cities, etc. The Golden Mountains and Siberian Switzerland built up the main framework of what they knew about the region. By referring to these mental pictures, they maintained and upgraded own social and cultural status.

It is evident that these spatial representations prevailed over the rest of the imagery. Yet, it is remarkable how peacefully they would dwell in the various textual genres despite their different background. Perhaps, their intimate connection to similar discourses explains such compatibility. Cut from the same cloth, both images predominated in the public mind and nearly obscured other mental pictures of the place. Siberian Switzerland clearly visualized the otherwise vague contours of the Golden

[595] Tuan, *Topophilia,* 113.
[596] Semeka, "400 verst v chelnoke po r. Bie", 248.

Mountains, whereas the latter provided it with the inner density and specific content. Although the Golden Mountains served as a standard representation of the place, only Siberian Switzerland supplied the proper means for the visual making of the Altai. This image arrived quite timely. Freighted with the ideological and symbolical meanings, Siberian Switzerland firmly stood for the Russian Altai.

8.4. "The Russian Altai"

From the mid-century on, the monarch's private region acquired a reputation of the attractive place for many social groups. It was a setting for several ongoing imperial projects: massive peasant resettlement, the exploitation of mineral reserves, the Trans-Siberian railroad construction, the converting of local natives to Christianity, etc. The combination of natural wealth and the relatively moderate climate made it an exception to the rest of Siberia. One can only guess how this place would have been mapped, if not the endowment of material resources.

The closing part highlights a couple of the particular facets in the versatile imagery. It briefly examines how two socially contrasting groups, the Cabinet officials and Russian peasants, envisioned the region. It argues that these groups, one with the greatest outreach over the region, and the larger one that directly colonized the place, did not produce any significant image of the Altai. Finally, in order to illustrate a conflict between different imageries of the region, a representation that was coined by the networks with the seemingly less material concerns will be explored.

Although only the tsar's special permission provided an entry point to settling in his private region, over a few decades, hundreds of thousands of Russian peasants moved there, both in the legal as well as the illegal way.[597] The venue attracted settlers simply because they had more opportunities to quickly achieve and sustain material stability.[598] Illiterate peasants did not share cultural codes of the educated Russians, this larger group was far from constructing an analog of the peasants' golden mountains. The void had been filled up in two ways. First, the very fact that people migrated to the Altai ignoring the rest of Siberia was the best evidence for the region's top position on peasants' mental maps. Second, the resettlement officials gradually translated peasants' desire to settle there into an idea of "the favorite settlement El

[597] Skliarov, *Pereselenie i zemleustroistvo v Sibiri*, 69-70, 107-108, 262-268.
[598] Kaufman, *Pereselenie i kolonizatsiia*, 280, 292-94; *Spravochnaia knizhka dlia khodokov i pereselentsev*, 48-50.

Dorado".[599] Although shared by broad groups of the society, it was not the one that Russian peasants would understand. Along with this, the booklets about the Altai region widely employed the tropes of abundance, the image of the Promised Land and even the notorious Golden Mountains.[600] Obviously, these means did not work out for illiterate peasants. To make it plain for them, the authors of the pamphlets had to reshape the migration rhetoric and bring the Altai closer to the target audience by mapping it as a place: "where one could live very well".[601]

Uncultured peasants were not the only group that did not bother to bring their input into the regional imagery. If necessary, the officials of the Cabinet of His Majesty borrowed the ready-to-go representations from popular geographies, in particular, Siberian Switzerland and the Golden Mountains.[602]

Official geographers depicted the region as "a mountainous area that spatially exceeds Switzerland and does not belong to the state property, but to the Cabinet of His Majesty, to the property of the Emperor".[603] Popular sources emphasized the special status of the district in the imperial territorial order either by employing the bold font or by emphasizing "the so called Altai mining district".[604] Contemporary commentators deployed the tropes of superiority and valorization regarding the region. The monarch's domain was considered unanimously as Siberia's best part.[605] "The pearl of Siberia", another materially inspired image of the Altai, illustrates this suggestion, but, obviously, it was not the single 'pearl' in the imperial diadem.[606]

Actual shape and size of the district were known in broad outline, and the data appeared in various sources. Generally, it took up 382 000 quadrate versts or 400 000 000 desiatin.[607] In terms of representing the region, a particular practice was often at work. Generally, it was widely employed in depicting Siberia and its huge provinces in the late century. The territorial size of the economically advanced European countries

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[599] Kaufman, "Zemel'nyi vopros i pereselenie", 78-140.
[600] *Rasskazy dlia pereselentsev*, 49; also, Stolypin, Krivosheev, *Poezdka v Sibir' i Povolzh'e*, 3, 25, 70; Sunderland, "The 'Colonization Question': Visions of Colonization in late Imperial Russia", 210-232.
[601] *Rasskazy o Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 81.
[602] Strukov, *Kratkii ocherk Altaiskogo gornogo vedomstva*, 3; *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, I, 392.
[603] Semenov, *Okrainy Rossii. Sibir', Turkestan, Kavkaz*, 8.
[604] Iablonskii, *Putevoditel' po Altaiu*, 1; Mamyshev, "Altai", 43; Turbin, *Sibir'. Kratkoe zemleopisanie*, 71; Petrov*, Zapadnaia Sibir': Gubernii Tobol'skaia i Tomskaia*, 43.
[605] Arsen'ev, *Statisticheskie ocherki Rossii*, 219-222; *Kratkii istoricheskii ocherk Altaiskogo okruga,* 134-135; Polenov, *Ocherk raboty Geologicheskoi chasti*, 28, 31; Kaufman, "Zemel'nyi vopros i pereselenie", 92; Freiman, *Otchet po zolotopromyshlennosti*, 1; Golovachev, *Sibir'. Velikaia Rossiia*, 93-95.
[606] Golubev, *Altai. Istoriko-statisticheskii sbornik*, 1.
[607] *Pamiatnaia knizhka Tomskoi gubernii na 1884 god,* 12-13.

served as an imaginary cutout that would visualize the remote peripheries and invest them with imaginary life and dynamics.[608] As a rule, three countries, France, Prussia, and Switzerland served as a standard reference in such depictions.[609]

This geographical practice met the growing public demand in the imagining and visualizing the Altai region. Some authors equaled the region to France; others estimated it as only 5/6 of it.[610] Partly, such practice made up the absence of the region on the maps of Asiatic Russia.[611] However, the outlines of the district were clearly marked in the target-oriented publications: e.g. a rough scheme for the migrating peasants or the detailed chapter about the monarch's private domain in the posh publication "Aziatskaia Rossia".[612]

However, the Altai imagery had a certain facet that was not directly related to larger spatial strategies and mineral mapping. This was evident in the image "the Altai as the Athos" invented by the servants of the regional Orthodox mission. Its activities covered the Turkic speaking native groups in two southern districts of the Tomskaia province in the period between 1830 and 1917.[613]

What were the missionaries' responses to the new environment? Since all servants would come from Central Russia, it took them a long time to grow accustomed to the surrounding relief that caused sheer depression "*navodilo tosku i unynie*".[614] Although they perceived the mountains as the Other scene, the impact of European landscape aesthetics on these social groups was evident as well. The following episode provides a good example for it.

On a sunny summer day in 1874, God's servant Trofim Sokolovskii was heading off to the Altai mission. After a long journey on the notorious Russian roads, he finally passed the town of Biisk in the Tomskaia province. Below is how he would recollect his "topographical shock":

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[608] *Tomskaia guberniia. Spisok naselennykh mest po svedeniiam 1859 g*., I; Iadrintsev, *Sibir' kak koloniia*, 3; *Zhivopisnaia Rossiia*, 350; Miropiev, *O polozhenii russkikh inorodtsev*, 282; Kraev, *Geografiia Tomskoi gubernii*, 13.
[609] Strukov, *Kratkii ocherk Altaiskogo gornogo vedomstva*; Sibiriak-Skitalets, "Altai i Kabinet", 50.
[610] *Tomskaia guberniia*, *Spisok naselennykh mest po svedeniiam 1859 g*., 3; *Aziatskaia Rossiia*, I, 391; Kraev, *Geografiia Tomskoi gubernii*, 1; Morozov, *Altaiskii okrug v kolonizatsionnom otnoshenii,* 1; Shchurovskii, *Geologicheskoe puteshestvie po Altaiu*, VII; Otpetyi, *Altai, budushchaia Kaliforniia Rossii*, 15.
[611] Il'in, *Podrobnyi atlas Rossiiskoi imperii c planami glavneishikh gorodov*. nos. 2, 4; "Karta Aziiatskoi Rossii". Sostavlena g.m.Koverskim.
[612] "Karta Sibirskoi zheleznoi dorogi" in *Rasskazy o Zapadnoi Sibiri*; *Aziatskaia Rossia,* I, 402-403.
[613] Znamenski, "Dialogues about Spirit and Power: Altaian Natives and the Orthodox Mission"'.
[614] Sokolovskii, "Zapiski missionera Altaiskoi missii", 39-41.

> "In front of us, 150 versts away from us, we suddenly viewed the mountains [...] they hanged like clouds. I exclaimed, "Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" [...] It was astonishing and frightening! God created these formidable giants that reached the sky with their heads. It felt like mountains spread fear".[615]

The missionaries' records filled up many Orthodox periodicals of the period. Their depictions implied two ways: either the mission selected its servants on the basis of their outstanding literary talents or their notes were thoroughly edited by professionals. Either way, it is hard to pinpoint who would put the Altai landscapes into the picturesque frame: missionaries, who were immersed in the everyday duties, or journalists of the Orthodox periodicals.

Predictably, "the Altai Apostles" sought for sources of inspiration in the Orthodox topographical arsenal. If the Altai had been located on the isles, it could have been presented as "Siberian Solovki"; if the place had comprised low hillsides and small lakes, it could have been turned into the second "Ferapontova desert". In terms of highlands, the Greek Athos embodied the canonical sublime and mountainous area in the Orthodox imagination.[616] Other Russian Athos in the period were under construction in the Caucasus and the Crimea.[617] This stimulated the missionaries to invent an Athos of their own on the Russo-Chinese border.

The Orthodox representation of the Altai emerged since the early 1860s, in the same time with Siberian Switzerland, which, probably, was familiar to the missionaries. However, they rejected the rival representation because it could not express their beliefs and desires. This glamour frame was too controversial to accommodate to the difficult service of the Orthodox fathers. However, the report of the mission's head Stefan Landyshev mapped the place in the classical Sublime style.[618]

The image "Altai - Athos" turned out inherently contradictory, since its descriptive means were too obviously borrowed from the secular sources. If needed, Switzerland or the Alps could painlessly replace the reference to the Athos. Apart from that, the picture encapsulated the religious way of thinking, that is, the binary opposition 'good' vs. 'bad'. Although Landyshev and the editors meant to create an opposition

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[615] Sokolovskii, "Ot Biiska do Ulaly. Putevye zametki", 97-99.
[616] Oro dell', *Imagining Mount Athos.*
[617] *Kozelsky*, *Christianizing Crimea.*
[618] Landyshev, "Altaiskaia dukhovnaia missiia", 109.

between the Orthodox Athos and 'the pagan Altai, their attempt failed, however. The cultural impact of Siberian Switzerland was too strong to ignore.

Nevertheless, the missionaries continued constructing the image of the Orthodox citadel on the imperial edge. Mikhail Putintsev, a member of the Altai mission, attempted to piece the discursive mosaic anew:

> "Many writers and non-writers, who have been to the Altai, call this wonderful corner of Siberia, Siberian Switzerland. But I think that the above epigraph (*a reference to Landyshev's quote*) is incomparably closer to the truth than a comparison to Switzerland, if, apart from the exterior resemblance of natural beauties between the Athos and the Altai, one considers their spiritual resemblance".[619]

This message can be decoded as follows: our enormous efforts transformed the pagan Altai into a holy place: "the Athos and the Altai are truly God's mountains". Furthermore, the missionary painted Switzerland as an apparently beautiful place with internal disorders, "a shelter of anarchists, nihilists, socialists, terrorists, murders of the tsars" and so on: "What is Switzerland to us? [...] The calm Altai is ashamed of being compared to Switzerland"![620] The focus has clearly shifted. The European country was treated as a pagan villain, whereas the author attributed special spiritual features to the Altai equal to those of the Athos.

Obviously, Putintsev efforts to show how well suited this place was for the purposes of religious nationalism formed a local version of the mountainous Orthodoxy on the Russo-Chinese borderline. The attempt to incorporate the non-Russian periphery into Orthodox mental maps turned the Altai into the third Athos. The conflict between Siberian Switzerland and the Athos reveals the controversial impact of secular culture on the missionaries, who widely employed the Sublime rhetoric for the scarcity of the Orthodox symbolic means. However, due to their vigorous attempts, the Altai appeared on mental maps of the Orthodox believers.

The further episode highlights the impact of Siberian Switzerland on "the apostles of the Altai". In August of 1908, a small deputation of the Altai natives was granted an audience with the Russian monarch. This rare chance was used to submit a formal complaint to the owner of the district regarding the illegal peasant resettlement.

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[619] Putintsev, "Altai. Ego sviatyni", 28-29.
[620] Ibid., 29.

Peasants massively occupied the areas that the law provided for the nomads. By illegally appropriating extensive stretches of their land, Russians forced the nomads to the less favorable areas.

Unsurprisingly, Siberian Switzerland formed a red thread in the speech that the native missionary, father Stefan Borisov dedicated to the emperor Nikolas. A product of the obvious editing work, it consisted of the clichés and reassurances in the loyalty of the natives. However, the audience was reduced to declaiming the blessings for the monarch in the native language. Humbly closing his speech, Borisov invited the emperor to visit his remote domain. By referring to the prestigious image of Siberian Switzerland, the missionary sounded like the guidebooks of the early twenty-first century. In his appeal, Borisov promised the monarch the unknown joys in the luxurious climate of the wild, virgin and charming Altai (*neizvedannye udovolstviia v roskoshnom klimate*). Local healthy air would strengthen the supreme ruler in his difficult service for the coming years.[621] However, the sovereign did not use the chance to see the wild and charming Altai in person.

The superiority of Siberian Switzerland was evident in the iconographic struggle between the Orthodox and secular cultures. The outreach of the latter proved to be too irresistible in this case. Shared by broad groups, this highly charged representation did not require extra explanations and work of imagination, as the image of the Athos did. Although the missionaries spared no effort in inventing a mental picture of their own, it was restricted to circulating in the narrow Orthodox circles.

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The Altai became incorporated into imperial imagination in different ways and through different images. By converting the place into multiple images, popular geographies played a key role in representing it for wide public circles. Various groups remapped and appropriated the region through the socially structured representations and imbued it with new semantics. Indeed, these images served to bridge the long-standing gaps between the Altai and the rest of the country spatially and culturally.

The German naturalists in the imperial service became the first credible image-makers that helped create the Altai in the public mind. Furthermore, it was culturally re-imagined as a place in order to be brought onto broader imperial mental maps, as more people experienced, described, and popularized the monarch's private region. The

[621] "Deputatsiia altaiskikh kalmykov v Petergofe", 16-19.

general public made this venue a geographical equivalent of the Golden Mountains as well as Siberian Switzerland. Both images powerfully connected the region with the valuable material substance and landscape.

The analysis of the representations confirms Alan Baker's suggestion that, "present places are palimpsests of past events; they have been repeatedly written on, partially wiped out, and written on again."[622] It demonstrates that this imagery was not a random collection of the mental pictures for public consumption, but a tightly structured and hierarchical set that symbolically reshaped the colonial landscapes in the popular imagination. This case illustrates the ways in which material landscapes were transformed into metaphorical spaces. Its landscapes have been given different interpretations over the time. The examination of the historical and cultural contexts in which the Altai imagery was produced and consumed reveals the structure of values and the expectations of the society that envisioned them, as Mark Bassin has pointed out in regard of another Siberian region.[623]

Although various groups mobilized the imagery for different goals, there is one clear purpose that this exceptional diversity attained. Geographer Edward Relph has observed that the identity of a place is socially structured. Moreover, the image of a place is its identity.[624] Too many groups constructed too many identities of the single region. Although it conjured a consistent set of meanings, it seems that "The Russian Altai" formed the most important colonial identity that eclipsed other images.

Multiple spatial representations can be seen within the same place, which was made visible through the concerted efforts of diverse networks.[625] It is evident that these images became communicational vehicles through which discourses and desires of the groups with the less spatial outreach were channeled. The descriptive frameworks treated the region as a heavily coded landscape that was shared by diverse groups and agendas. The educated as well as the less advanced ones disseminated the diverse images of the place in order to promote their interests or improve own cultural status. The place and its representations become too inextricable in the geographical imagination. Once tightly controlled by the ruling elites, the Altai posed now a common imaginary property of the Russian society.

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[622] Baker, *Geography and History. Bridging the Divide*, 221.
[623] Bassin, *Imperial Visions, Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion,* 6.
[624] Relph, *Place and Placelessness*, 47, 56.
[625] Massing, "Places and Their Pasts", 185-186.

CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to chart the connections between power, geographical space, and spatial knowledge in a particular region of imperial Russia. The narrative evolved around two fields: by reconstructing the mapping of the Altai, it explored several paths that lay behind the modern Berg Discourse. This vantage point enables us to rethink the issues of continuity, change, and difference in the Russian past in another light.

What does the mapping of the Altai imply? When did the invention of this place begin? The study examined various approaches to the undertaking, as Europeans and Russians mapped different locations and meanings. Each attempt was different from the previous one. European imaginary geographies treated it as the Mongol khans' burial site. The Siberian mapmaker Semen Remezov's vision depicted the bizarre Great Altai Rock that stretched from Asia's heartland to the Pacific Ocean. The German scientists in the imperial service mapped it as the Golden Mountains. The Russian rulers constructed the Altai as a vast economic region that took a special rank in the country's territorial taxonomy. Various groups constructed the place and invested it with certain meanings and images. Despite the differences, there were distinctive features that brought these undertakings together: each mapping produced a new Altai. This confirms its original meanings in Mongolian and Turkic cultures: *Altai* stands for geographical space that consists of many places, or simply *altais*.

It is evident that the power patterns of the imperial period shaped whatever occurred to the place afterwards, although Soviet modernity mapped the place anew. The regime ruthlessly deleted imperial discourses, but it advanced with the colonization projects launched by its precursor. The unexplored mineral belt with vast reserves of coal and metals and other resources became the core of the grand-scale Soviet endeavors: the Kuzbass, "The Grand Altai", and the Virgin Lands. The last "individual" attempt to contest mineral resources of the region was made by the controversial painter Nikolai Roerich, who tried to talk the Soviet government into leasing the place in the mid-1920s. His keen interest in natural riches of "Northern Shambala" was ably covered under diverse cultural activities that he planned here.[626]

[626] McCannon, "By the shores of white water", 166-189; Rosov, *Nikolai Rerikh. Vestnik Zvenigoroda*, 193-95; 218-221.

In the post-Soviet decades, the Altai continues to enjoy a special regional identity that owes to colonial legacies. Its mythicized landscapes seize touristic imagination as "a bridge to the Everest" and as a magnet for seekers of the diverse "isms": Buddhism, esotericism, mysticism, etc. that added the Altai to a global network of power places. It seems that too many symbols and myths coexist side by side here. A repository of singular spiritual experience for many generations, this colony fulfills the compensating functions of being what Russian geographies always lacked and always wanted to have. However, in the age of prevailing material values, the Golden Mountains by the Enlightenment naturalists eventually overshadow the rest of the regional imagery. Along with that, further Russification of the region continues under the slogan "*Serdstu milaia svetlaia Rus'*".[627]

Today, the Altai Republic remains a place that knits together power, space, and the Berg Discourse. Once the native missionary appealed to the monarch to visit this part of his private domain. Nowadays, it is a favorite vacation destination of many members of the post-Soviet ruling elites. This is confirmed by the notorious "Putin's Dacha", a Chinese style villa built in one of the valleys. At the same time, the mineral concerns are still on the agenda of the central and regional groups. For several years, Gazprom has lobbied to install gas pipeline from West Siberia to China through the Altai even though that would mean irreversible changes to its landscapes.

The ongoing shift in attitudes to mountain spaces that launched with the conquest of Siberia can never be complete. It is evident that mountain spaces continue holding a controversial position in the Russian geographical imagination. The settings of the conflict in Afghanistan and two recent bloody wars in the North Caucasus are brought to the limelight only when "national pride" is on the agenda, as the recent contest "Seven Wonders of Russia" and the Winter Olympics in Sochi suggested.[628] However, the latest version of the state hymn demonstrates the shift from the earlier symbols of the landscape diversity back to the traditional patterns: "*ot iuzhnykh morei do poliarnogo kraia/ raskinulis' nashi lesa i polia".*[629]

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[627] Burmatov, "Esli est' na zemle rai, to eto Gornyi Altai".

[628] The patriotic-minded Internet vote "Seven Wonders of Russia" (2007) provided the list of the most exotic landscapes including the Caucasian Elbrus, the Wind Pillars in Komi Republic, and the mountanous Geysers valley in Kamchatka.

[629] The early song placed the Soviet country between southern mountains and northern seas: "*s yuzhnykh gor do severnykh morei*".

Modern technologies advanced in exploiting mineral reserves out of various landscapes. This has largely eclipsed and weakened the conceptual links between underground treasures and mountain terrains. But precisely the North Asian *Kameni* formed the symbolical precursors of today's oil wells and gas fields that ensure the country's modern economy and the wealth of its elites. Nowadays, the average mindset barely links this scene neither to the Khanty-Mansiiskii gas fields, kimberlitic diamond rocks of Yakutia or to oil platforms on the Barents Sea and the Sakhalin. Although the modern language does not provide for a clear link between mountains and natural resources, imperial history and culture clearly display a strong connection between minerals and mountains. This understated link was evident in many Soviet projects; e.g. a series of the mineral fairy tales "The Mistress of a Copper Mountain" ("*Mednoi gory khoziaika*") appeared in the same time with the industrialization in Magnitogorsk.[630] Deeply invested with state ideology, the stories revolved around the old idea of contesting control over the riches from the powerful ones. In the spirit of time, the seeming power over minerals was asserted in a statement: "Our mountains will give everything that a man needs" ("*Nashi gory vse dadut, chto cheloveku ponadobitsia*").[631] Intimately tied up with Soviet modernity, the Berg-Discourse greatly contributed to Soviet and Russian geopolitical ambitions and outreach as well as to the making of famous "cultural" products, from Kalashnikov rifles to airspace achievements, etc.

Obviously, the Berg Discourse implies more than the mineral sector and resources governance of the country. Its evolvement highlights the relationships between state, society, and space in authoritarian regimes. The ambivalent legacy has persisted over time and adapted to different changes, whereas the knowledge matrix "spatial power – mountains – resources" proved immune to political changes over the last century.

Since the early 2000s, there is a clear revival of the interest in mountain spaces by the government and in contemporary culture that confirms an inherent connection between resources and mountains. One of the recent Russian banknotes depicts the vague mountain contours behind the figure of Count Nikolai Muraviev-Amurskii, the prominent pioneer of the Far East colonization. The same regards the figure of "the Master of the Mountain" (*Khoziain gory*), the head of the Mineral Resources Ministry in the futurological motion picture about Russia of 2020.[632] Such cultural products

[630] Bazhov, *Malakhitovaia shkatulka*; Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization*.
[631] Bazhov, "Rudianoi pereval", II, 139.
[632] "The Target" ("*Mishen'*", 2010), the screenplay by Vladimir Sorokin and Aleksandr Zel'dovich.

mirror governmental concerns, also apparent in the re-conquest of the Arctic and the new-old colonization project "About the Development of Siberia and Far East". The reasons behind the activation of mountains in the imagination are not difficult to discern. The latest endeavors bring the discourse back to its forgotten roots and to where early modern Muscovites began breaking up ore with the iron bars.

What is the Berg Discourse in today's Russian Federation? Slightly rebranded and omnipresent in power configurations, it acts as a connective tissue between the strengths and limits of state policies. This crucial force remains well preserved in concerns, drives, and compulsions of the central and regional officials, whose unlimited appetite is buttressed by mineral wealth. Recently, the discourse has taken on entirely new forms. Its facade and darker side have become particularly apparent not only in the looming contours of the *Gazprom Tower* in the metropolis and the *Gazprom Peak* (3 412 m) in the Altai range.

An essential connection became apparent that exists between the Berg Discourse and the rulers' deep-seated hubris built on the principle "resource answereth it all". They transformed power over space and minerals into an essential element of their identity. The eighteenth-century verses "Oh, heaven, hear our prayers! May the precious metals be multiplied in Russia!" became a favorite mantra of today rulers.[633]

It is evident that Russia embraced modernity on its own terms, and, ever since, has been painstakingly pulling its archaic and anti-modern luggage into the bright future. The last two decades saw the failure of the country to develop democratic institutions that would have enabled it to turn immense mineral riches into something more than fueling the rulers' insatiable and futile ambitions in upholding Russia's exaggerated prestige of a superpower. Although natural reserves promise wide opportunities of economic growth, a black hole of the deeply flawed and corrupted state makes them disappear for good. The dire symptoms of "the Dutch disease" reveal the ruling elites' inherent inability to use natural riches for the prosperity of the country. Thus, continuities between the eighteenth century and today are not merely symbolic. Once the Enlightenment naturalist referred to the main purpose of the mineral wealth as "to adorn the ruler, astonish the world, and intimidate the enemies". This statement sounds amazingly reminiscent in regard to internal and external policies of the Russian Federation.

[633] Bogdanova, "Stikhi o rudokopnom dele" (1736), pt. II.6.

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